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THE MINISTER AT WORK

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Praching

THE MINISTER AT WORK

By

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TO
MY WIFE
TO WHOSE WISE COUNSEL
KINDLY CRITICISM
AND NEVER-FAILING INSPIRATION
I OWE SO MUCH

FIRST EDITION 1910

Preface

THE following chapters consist of lectures delivered to the students of the Hartley Primitive Methodist College, Manchester, and are printed practically as they were given; consequently the personal and practical notes are prominent. The ground covered is incomplete; the exigencies of space having excluded such themes as 'The Minister and Missions,' 'Personal Habits and Deportment,' and 'Ministerial and Church Etiquette.'

In the hope that these lectures may be found useful to young ministers and lay preachers generally the author ventures to send them out into a wider sphere.

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PART I
THE MINISTER AS PREACHER

I

The Preacher and his Aim

I WISH this lecture to be regarded as general and preliminary to others which will deal in a more practical and detailed manner with the art and method of preaching. I am quite aware that no number of rules will make a preacher, as the best-arranged curriculum cannot make a scholar. Yet rules there must be; for if principles and precedents are ignored, native capacity is wasted, and mental chaos is the result. Just as a locomotive runs more easily along the rail-track, so work pursued along tested and well-laid lines is more smoothly, quickly, and efficiently done. It is assumed in these lectures that you are called to the ministry, and that if you had not listened to the call you would have gone out of the way of Providence. One has said, 'Do not preach if you dare be silent.' Possibly the call has not been so decisive as this, yet there is a deep impression that you are in your right places, and that necessity is laid upon you to become preachers.

Yes, 'to become a preacher' should be the first object and primary task of the Christian minister.

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Preaching is the foremost obligation of the Church, for Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the gospel before He commissioned them to baptize, and it is the sure sign of a rising or falling church. When the waves of religious success have moved rapidly and strongly, the sermon has been upon their crest, for with every revival of religion there has been a revival of preaching. The pulpit, however, does not occupy the unique position it once enjoyed. For centuries it was the one medium of conveying truth to the people. For long periods in our history there were no schools, no newspapers, and but few books. The people were unlettered too, so that almost all instruction had to come through the preacher. All this has changed, for there are many teachers to-day apart from the minister. This change has made the minister's duties at once easier and harder. It has released him from the task of promiscuous instruction, and so has freed him for his more specific work. But this, while narrowing his sphere, renders it more difficult, for he is now expected to be an expert in his calling. He has now to make good his claim to be heard by reason of his superior fitness for that work. The time was when people went to church and listened to the preacher whether he had anything to say or not ; they felt it was their duty to listen. But now they go if they like the preacher, and if they do not they often stay at home and read a book or paper. Our authority to minister in these days is the ability to do so,

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and it is more necessary than ever that a minister be able to preach. Preaching has been the Christian method of propagating and preserving the faith: not by sword, or fire, or decalogue, or ordinance, but by preaching. 'How shall they hear without a preacher?' Hence it is imperative that the Church retain and cultivate the preaching gift; her ministers *must* learn how to preach. This is their first business. As it is the business of the farmer to farm, the weaver to weave, and the schoolmaster to teach, so is it the business of the preacher to preach. With Ward Beecher we say, 'Preaching is business, gentlemen,' preaching is business. To accomplish this end certain things are necessary.

I. The first thing required is the *man*. This is primary and fundamental, for all the colleges, books on preaching, and open pulpits in the world will not make a preacher unless there be the man. Not all ministers are men. We do not to-day, as was the custom in the upper classes a few years ago, make the fool in the family into a clergyman; but there is still a danger of making the man who has failed at everything else into a minister. But the minister needs all the elements that go to the making of a true man; manhood at its very best is needed here. If preaching be the 'communication of truth through personality,' then not only is an understanding of truth necessary, but a strong, developing personality. We say of some men, 'they have no personality.' If this be true of a minister he is doomed as an effective preacher. But no young

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man need despair on this account altogether, for personality is, at least to a certain extent, a developing quality; and the first aim of a preacher should be the growth of a soul, or self. Personality, like the body through which it expresses itself, is developed by the atmosphere in which it lives and the food upon which it feeds. Its food is found chiefly in the choices—mental, moral, and spiritual—which it makes. If day by day it is choosing the higher, it is approximating to God, the absolute and supreme Personality. Of this larger self we get occasional glimpses and hints, which are evidence that there is a subconscious self much larger than the conscious; and to make the possible actual, to bring this buried self to the surface—in other words, to develop personality, is the purpose of existence.

Now it is possible for a man to decide the kind of personality he will grow. He cannot combine in himself every type of personality; he cannot be a warrior and a saint, a philosopher and a society beau, a fortune-builder and a prophet—‘no man can be every man.’ The Christian minister by his very vocation is compelled to eschew certain types of personality and to select others; he is compelled to shun the grasping, selfish, ambitious types and choose the lowly, the pure, the self-less, and the Christly. And it is this choice that decides the tone and colour of a man’s life and work. But more, it decides also the potency of his influence and utterance. Personality is the dynamo from

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which issue those currents that make a man's words weak or strong. This was the secret of the influence of Jesus. In more than a physical and even psychic sense 'virtue went out of Him.' This is the indispensable preliminary Pentecost, for before the Holy Ghost can equip He must have something to seize and use. The most accomplished organist cannot get much music out of a two-octave instrument. Only as the self develops can we hope to be effective; it is manhood that spells might. The bigger the man the bigger will his influence be, and the minister should be the biggest man in his parish or his church. He should be a big slice of humanity; a great human; a Saul among the prophets; a real 'master in Israel.' In secular life it is expected that the master can do the task he sets better than the servant; and a preacher will create but few graces, but little faith, hope, and love, if he does not possess more than his people. The pulpit must have in it the most hopeful, the tenderest, the most believing man of the whole fraternity.

The influence of personality, however, is something distinct from egoism, or the introduction of personal history into pulpit ministrations. This is occasionally permissible, but too often it is an impertinence and a vulgarity. Who needs to hear a full description of the slime-pit of sin out of which the preacher was rescued, and what right has any man to make the character of *his* conversion a type to which all others should conform? In true and effective personality the big 'I' is absent; like Peter's

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shadow it heals as it passes. It should not be aggressively, but allusively present : felt but not seen ; so intricately woven into the warp and woof of an utterance that it cannot be disentangled nor even detected ; so subtly present as not to impair the infallible message by the intrusion of the fallible messenger. The first thought of the minister must be the development of personality, the building of the man ; for unless the man is ever bigger than the office he is unfit for his post.

II. The man must have a *message*. He is not only a truth-seeker, but an utterer of truth, the deliverer of a message. He is this above all besides. He is a teacher, a comforter, a guide, an administrator ; but before and above all else he is a forth-teller. He is a priest, for he mediates in many things, but he is still more a prophet. ' His functions are not sacerdotal, but they *are* sacramental.' This, at least, is the Protestant view. In the Roman Catholic Church preaching is a superfluity, but in the Church of the Reformation it is an essential. It is, as Dr. Forsyth has expressed it, a part of the Protestant Church's worship, for in it she makes her confession and recites her creed. But the message of the preacher is primarily the truth as it is in Jesus ; it is a gospel message. He is not free to spin out his own philosophies and to air his idiosyncrasies. He is an ambassador whose message is a commission. At the same time it must be his own message. It must have become so absorbed as to be part of himself, as the moon's light has become her own, although

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borrowed to begin with from the sun ; so inextricably mixed that the dividing line between the human and the divine cannot be traced. Indeed, the truth to be effective must be thus assimilated—there must be in it the ‘blood-streaks of experience’ ; or, to change the figure, it is divine truth as it becomes molten in the crucible of human experience that the preacher is called to deliver, and which is felt by others. Our call is to proclaim the truth as *we* feel it and see it. It should be *our* message and not another’s. As the bird has its own note and sings its own song, so the preacher is called to express his own message ; and only when the message and the messenger have become one, the latter ready to stake body and soul, goods and reputation upon its truthfulness, does the message become effective.

It is this fusion that supplies the needed note of authority, and saves the declaration from the weakness that always accompanies mere hearsays. The words of the seven sons of Sceva were mere hearsay, and without authority, when they sought to exorcise the evil spirits from the people brought to them : ‘We adjure you by Jesus whom *Paul* preacheth.’ The name they invoked was one that had come to them in form only. ‘Whom *Paul* preacheth,’ not ‘whom *we* preach.’ They knew nothing of Jesus. He was a name to be repeated and not a power realized ; it was all second-hand, and so meaningless and abortive. Significant also was our Lord’s answer to Pilate’s question—‘Art Thou King of the Jews ?’ ‘Sayest thou this

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of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?'—as much as to say, 'My soul is in an agony; I am face to face with stern realities, and I can only answer real inquiries.' The real man cannot away with truth at second-hand. The soul in its crises asks for reality, and it knows the difference between a pedlar dealing in hearsay dogmas and a merchant who offers pearls which he himself has risked his life to bring up from the deep sea of truth; and when the true man speaks, he who has heard and absorbed the truth and made it his own, others will stand arrested and become obedient to his voice.

III. How is he to *get* this message?

1. It is unnecessary to say that it will be by research; by inquiry into the mind of God as revealed in His Word, in personal experience, and in the needs of our fellow men. The primary source is of course the Bible. Of the nature, the structure, and the contents of this book it is not mine to speak, but permit me to say that you may give diligent heed to these things and yet not know how to read and study the Bible from the preacher's standpoint. The student goes to it in a different spirit and for a different purpose from the preacher's. Of course the preacher needs to know it from the point of view of the scholar, the dates, characteristics, and messages of the various writings it contains; but such knowledge is preliminary to his own message rather than part of it. The learner is in danger of forgetting this, and of regarding these things as essential instead of collateral. They are the scaffolding of

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the building, necessary and helpful, but not the building itself. The background of the picture is needed to give it effect—there can be no impressive production without it, but it is not the picture. The technical study and academic presentation of the Bible are for the class-room and lecture-hall, not for the pulpit; and to bring them into the pulpit as if they were the essentials is like carrying a lecture on diseases and their remedies into the sick-room instead of medicine. The preacher is first and foremost an evangelist, and after his technical study of the Book he must begin to read it again with other eyes and motives; he must now go in search of his evangel—the message he is called to deliver. He must study it now from the preacher's viewpoint, and as the fountal source of his utterances. Here the mind of God as revealed to the best men of the most religious nation is preserved, and consequently to this book in the first instance the preacher must turn. But this source will be supplemented and corroborated by the preacher's own experience, and by human needs in general. The message of the book harmonizes with personal experience—'it finds me'—and what has come with health and healing to a man's own soul may be confidently preached to others. The needs of others will furnish additional material, and will bring the 'old, old story' into touch with the living present. In other words, the preacher must study human nature both in himself and others. As the physician studies the human body, seeking to understand its structure, so must

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the preacher seek to understand the man within. The doctor, also, must study the body pathologically as well as anatomically, from the point of view of disease as well as structure ; so the preacher must be able to diagnose moral ailments. He must be a spiritual physician as well as a psychologist, able to understand soul-sickness and minister to its cure. The preacher must diligently use his powers of insight and inquiry as a man in any other sphere is expected to do.

2. He gets his message also by retaining and cultivating the 'single eye,' the guileless, transparent spirit. The discovery of truth requires not only inquiry, but certain attitudes of spirit, one of which is truth, sincerity. 'The pure in heart shall see God,' and it may be added, 'shall hear God.' The poets speak of the 'music of the spheres'—i.e. of an ear sensitive enough to catch the consonances of the stars as they wheel in their orbits ; so the trained spirit, the guileless soul, catches the deeper rhythmic harmonies of truth. It is possible for the man with the double-eye, with low aim and crooked life, to be gifted enough to make the country yokel gape, to tickle the fancy and to create a momentary spasm of pleasure ; but food for the eternal needs of the soul he has none—the flock is unfed, the hungry go empty away. But, on the other hand, the simple, sincere soul, with far less talent, but possessing a nobler mood, comes from the garden of the gods with newly gathered ambrosia, satisfying the hunger of the flock. I plead for the single eye, the

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child-spirit, as being indispensable to the reception of the right and needed message.

3. Thirdly, the message comes by spiritual inquiry, or prayer. There must not only be searching, but waiting also. God has not only revealed Himself in His Book, but He is still a Revealer. He has not spoken His last word to men, nor shed His last beam of light. There is an illumination that comes direct from the Eternal Sun, which is only experienced by him who asks. Prayer has the power of lifting the blinds of the soul, of throwing back the shutters. I do not understand the philosophy of this, but I know that it is true. No doubt there is a psychology of prayer as yet but little understood. We do know, however, that prayer not only helps the heart, but lights up the mind; it sweeps the cataracts from the eyes of reason. It also sensitizes the heart by cleansing its motives and clarifying its aims.

IV. By an easy transition from these thoughts we pass to the inquiry, What is the *preacher's aim*? It is not enough to seek and receive a message. There is a previous question which is also a further one, What is its purpose? Every sermon should aim at something, at accomplishing something. A sermon is not like a picture, or some other work of art, whose end is in itself and which is accomplished in the making. It is rather a tool for doing some definite piece of work. Sometimes we hear a man spoken of as a 'great sermonizer,' which is in no way a compliment, for it reduces the

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production to a work of art—as, for example, a painting or piece of poetry. A sermon may be well built, but if it lacks aim it fails in its main purpose. Let us see that we are more anxious for the salvation of our hearers than for the salvation of the sermon.

1. The aim must be definite, and this in a general and specific sense. (1) General. The broad aim that must never be lost sight of is the bringing in of the kingdom of God by building up character and the making of manhood. There may be many subordinate motives at work which are quite legitimate, such as interesting men, pleasing and instructing them; but all these must be grouped around and commanded by the one master-motive of saving men. This aim should be regular and not spasmodic—felt only during periods of revival; but persistent in ordinary times, through dull days, cold seasons, and unromantic periods. It should be an all-pervading spirit, like the air and light in which we live and move and have our being.

(2) Preaching should also be definite in a specific sense. The range here is very wide. At one time it may be to instruct; at another to guide, to reprove, to comfort, or to convert. The aim may be to influence a particular class of hearer, but each class should be remembered in turn—the young and the full-grown, saint and sinner, the sick and the healthy soul. I am afraid that in our anxiety for the sick ones the healthy get neglected; we are apt to think that the preacher must always be the

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doctor. But more frequently he needs to be a baker rather than a physician—it is food that needs dispensing more than medicine; for while all the hearers are imperfect, many of them are healthy-minded and require most of all a table spread with the living bread.

2. The aim should be lofty as well as definite. However far short our realization may be, the aim cannot be lowered. The flag must be kept flying full and not at half-mast. No man must enter the ministry for the sake of a livelihood, and not only does he need to put the question at the beginning, 'Am I making this work a profession?' but he needs to ask it all through the years that follow, for there is more danger of secularization later than at first. Professionalism has become the bane of sport as of many other things, and it may be a menace to the preacher. Of course a living comes, or should come, to the man who forsakes all else for his task, but it comes incidentally rather than directly; and usually the man who is so devoted to his work as to forget his stipend is provided for more or less adequately, while he who places his own income first will be left to himself and little cared for. But low aims take other than mercenary forms. A man who may care little for money may care much for power and popularity, and will sell his soul to win and please the populace. ('The people is a great baby,' said Chalmers once petulantly.) But of what value is this, to say nothing of its degradation of the sacred office? As a rule it is the worst and feeblest part

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of a congregation that shouts the loudest, and it is this section that soonest grows hoarse and speechless. I do not say that the goodwill of others should be despised, but we must learn to go on whether we have it or not—simply go on, neither seeking nor despising popular appreciation; and one of the best antidotes to a morbid longing for applause, and for any other low aim, is to remember the fulfilled promise of Jesus—‘Whosoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst.’ If that promise means anything it means that Christ is always present in the assembly of real worshippers, although unseen. If that fact be but realized, then all slipshod preparation will be a thing of the past, the lips of the preacher will be cleansed from all complaining about scanty and unlettered congregations, and all longing for more praise and power will be smitten out of existence.

The first question a preacher needs to put to himself as he stands on the threshold of the ministry, and on the threshold of every sermon and of every service, is, ‘What is my aim?’ Then will follow the next, ‘How can I accomplish it?’ ‘How can I get my message into the hearts of my hearers?’ If rules on sermonizing will help, by all means adopt them; but if it can be better done by breaking every canon of homiletics, then break them. A gun is of very little value, be it never so polished, if it misses fire, and no sermon is a good one unless it does its work and accom-

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plishes the aim of the preacher. But we shall have occasion to see that a good marksman and good ammunition are aided by a good rifle. The following lectures will be an attempt to discover what are the best instruments for accomplishing the preacher's purpose, how he can get hold of them, and how they can be best used.

II

Preparation

IF little is said in this lecture about heart preparation it is not because it is undervalued, but because its necessity is so self-evident as to make discussion superfluous, and also because its discussion belongs rather to the realm of devotion than to homiletics. However, let it be said once for all that unless a preacher cultivates carefully his own religious life, and realizes in his own soul the faith and love which he essays to communicate to others, he is foredoomed to failure. The failure may not be immediate, but the germ is there of an earlier or later decay. The preparation of the heart is equally necessary with the preparation of the mind, for unless the sermon as well as the life be bathed in quiet waiting upon God it will lose more than half its effectiveness. Nor is it becoming or necessary in this series to enter into the subject of that general mental preparation which is implied in the whole college course, except in so far as it bears upon the preacher's specific work.

The minister's preparation is both general and specific.

Preparation

Refutation of...

I. *General*.—He has to prepare and store his mind in a general way before he proceeds to the preparation of a definite discourse. He needs to cut channels and to build aqueducts through which the waters of knowledge may be conveyed into the reservoir of the mind before he lets down the bucket to draw. Also his natural powers need to be cultivated, enlarged, and made malleable, so that he may come to the definite task with a supple, as well as with a richly stored, mind. If natural gifts are to be made the best of, they must be taken resolutely in hand; they must be passed through the mill. The power is in you, presumably, or you would not be in college. Let the same resolution be yours as was expressed by Sheridan, in memorable words, as he left the House of Commons with hisses in his ears: 'I have it in me, and it shall come out.' It is in you, but it can only come out by severe self-discipline and mental culture. Hence—

I. *Studious habits* need to be formed. The preacher's culture should be as wide as possible; not only ought he to know his Bible, but as much of other literature as time and talent permit. He certainly must be a reader, and a thoughtful reader too. He must learn to think as he reads, for it is not the number of books a man reads that go to his making, but the kind of books and the use he makes of them. He must not be afraid of stiff books, or confine himself to 'reading made easy,' for a stiff book is a fine mental stimulus

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and discipline. No matter if at first he fails to grasp its meaning, and if it involves some headaches and a few sighs; it is doing its work in developing the mental muscles and conferring an inestimable boon, for it is teaching him how to think. Not only should the habit of reading be formed, and of reading attentively and thoughtfully, but also 'the habit of reading rapidly,' for the reason that it 'gives pace to the mind,' accelerating all its movements. If reading be done slowly there is a danger of the mind going to sleep over the task, and when a thing is done dreamily and indolently very little good is got from the occupation. The preacher, although he must be a theologian, at least to a degree, certainly should not confine his reading, not even largely, to books on theology and religion, although in these he must keep abreast of the times. I have little patience with ministers who say that they read everything except theology. They are like a chemist who boasts that he sells everything but drugs. On the other hand, a preacher who reads nothing but theology is in danger of becoming technical, academic, and dry. Let him read biography, philosophy, science; for all are not only helpful personally, but contributory to his work. Science is especially helpful as supplying interesting, apt, and up-to-date illustrations; and you will find that no illustration is more appreciated by an audience than that drawn from the fields of natural science.

In order that your reading may be a direct help

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in sermon-making, it is wise to have a system of marking the margin (always assuming the book is your own), and of keeping a note-book with clearly defined headings of subjects, in which to enter the page where salient and suitable thoughts and passages may be found ; or perhaps a still better method is to possess a wide-margined or interleaved Bible, and to enter opposite a given text, or possible text, the page of the book you are reading on which occurs any thought or illustration that bears upon the passage. These references will accumulate, so that when you come to use the passage you will be able to command such results of your general reading as are apposite, and to find a body of helpful material ready to hand. This method will save much time spent in trying to recall and search up a remotely remembered passage, and will greatly enrich the discourse.

The preacher, too, needs to include in his reading the best poetry, so that his imagination may be cultivated and enlarged. This is important, for an unimaginative preacher, while he may be a capable teacher, will be dull and unattractive. The imagination, too, is developed by reading books of fiction. Such productions, however, need to be selected carefully and used sparingly, for the preacher's time is too precious to waste on anything but the best authors, and the results too precarious to give much attention even to these. The minister must be constantly replenishing his mental exchequer, not only becoming, but continuing to be,

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a real student, if his ministry is to have staying power.

2. Another means of general preparation is observation. The preacher must be open-eyed, taking notice of life's daily happenings and of men in particular. He must know man elementally, or in those primal qualities that constitute mankind as a whole. There is a sense in which every man differs from his fellow, but there also is a sense in which every man is alike. So that to know a man is to know mankind. Here the advantage of the study of psychology comes in; a preacher must know, either through books or observation, the working of the human mind, or else the truth he utters will have no sure goal; it will be indeed a 'bow at a venture.' But study of text-books is not the only way, nor yet the chief, of becoming a psychologist. The study of men and women—living, up-to-date text-books—is a surer way of becoming a master in this science. Some preachers have the psychological instinct. Henry Ward Beecher had it, and it was this that largely made him the mighty preacher that he was. He understood psychology before books were published upon the subject, or before it became a science. Such powers, however, are rare, and the bulk of men must gain the knowledge by slower methods. Yet psychologists we must be if we would discern the ways of the heart and be able to carry the truth through them right into the citadel of Man-soul. Through the study of human nature we

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shall come to know man, and through a knowledge of man to know men. It is said of Bossuet, the great French preacher, that 'he knew man better than men' (Phillips Brooks). A professional psychologist knows man, but he may not know men. The preacher, however, must know both, and he must strengthen his intuitions by observing his fellows in the mass and individually.

3. The preacher prepares in a general way by listening to the best preachers—listening not with the idea of being charmed by their oratory, but with a view to finding out their secret. This is a difficult task, for preachers are great in many different ways. You hear a man one Sunday of a certain type, and feel that there can be no other kind of preaching than his, no other can be called great; and on the following Sunday you hear another quite different, but equally great, and come away feeling that *this* preacher is the true model: which proves that every great preacher has his secret. In the above advice, however, there lies a possible danger. The novice is apt to conclude that because a certain type of sermon and of preacher is considered great, therefore it is the one to be adopted and followed. In listening to preachers, discrimination and selection must be made, and the model that most appeals to me must be interrogated for his secret. The tyro must not take a bit from this master, and a bit from that, piecing them together, for he is but making patchwork, and trying to blend incompatibles

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while he himself becomes a nondescript. The result is a composite photograph, with a suggestion of several faces, but a clear outline of none. Another danger of listening to model preachers is that of losing individuality. Better be an awkward originality than a poor, smooth copy of some one else. The best and safest way to gain advantage from listening to or by reading the sermons of great preachers is to bathe in their spirit, coming under their magnetic personality. Henry Ward Beecher tells us that as a young man he saturated himself in South, and something of that good bishop's spirit can be traced in the great American. But Beecher caught South's spirit and point of view, rather than took him slavishly as a model. Yet in some form or other the preacher, like every other apprentice, needs frequently to see how his task should be done—to observe a master-hand at work.

II. *Specific.*—Passing from general to specific preparation there are three principles I want to lay down.

1. It is important that it be done in the right atmosphere. There are some conditions under which it would be impossible to prepare a sermon, and it would be foolish to try.

(1) The atmosphere must be restful and quiet. The body must be at ease, and the mind placid. Do not attempt a sermon if you are unwell or even tired, nor if you have had a bad night's rest; and if you have to preach immediately following such conditions, then fall back upon something

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already prepared. Also defer preparation if your temper is ruffled through the presence of some tiresome visitor, or the receipt of an anonymous letter. Better wait until the anger has subsided, and assist its subsidence by sitting at the piano, or reading a book, or going out for a walk, or by taking a nerve powder, which has been called a 'bad-temper powder,' and rightly, for ill-temper is a nervous affection. Of course it is a condition that ought to be controlled, and can be if the will is brought into exercise and a little auto-suggestion practised. But, whether through nature or artifice, mental and emotional quietness must be restored before a sermon is attempted. We must 'stand still and see.' The stars of heaven are reflected only in the deep, unruffled bosom of the lake; heaven's truth is alone mirrored in the calm and quiet spirit.

(2) The religious atmosphere, too, is necessary; a sense of the Presence of God and of the unseen world. The preacher is a religious messenger; he speaks concerning spiritual things, and in order that these may be delivered aright and impressively a religious atmosphere is necessary to their preparation. A sermon prepared without a sense of the Eternal will be a secular product, and will produce only secular results, although it be interlarded with pious phrases and delivered to a worshipping audience. The religious atmosphere is best created by prayer. Luther was right when he said, 'Good praying is good study.' Prayer

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creates heat, brings light, realizes the presence of God, and under it truth becomes luminous.

(3) The self-forgetful atmosphere must be breathed. The true preacher seeks his message for the sake of others, to give it away. In order to do this effectively he requires to realize vividly the needs of others, and to lose himself in them; and this before, as well as at the time of, his ministration. Therefore wings must be given to the imagination; the preacher must see his congregation by faith before he sees it in the flesh. He needs to have it before his eyes while in his study, and to go from pew to pew looking into the faces of his people asking, What are their requirements, and what kind of food do they need? He must look into the trustful faces of the little children, upon the furrowed forehead of the business man, upon the placid countenance of the dear old saint sitting right in front, and upon the care-worn cheeks of the mother who has stolen away from her taxing duties for an hour's respite. Let these all pass before him with their mute appeals, and the sermon cannot be other than helpful. It will carry with it sweetness and balm, strength and healing; and if spirit-speech could be heard you would catch words like these—'The sermon this morning was for me, it found me and helped me.' On the other hand, the sermon that is made without such a realization may be well built, but will be aloof and cold when delivered. There will be lacking that suitability and spontaneity which give so much charm to a

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service. A sermon created under the light of spiritual imagination, even when most carefully prepared and delivered, will always be fresh ; its effect will be as if it were being made there and then. It is this that rids it of the old and musty flavour which an audience so much dislikes. The sermon must ' feel the audience ' while it is in the making, if the audience is to feel it when delivered. This is something quite different from making the sermon to fit one man or woman in the audience—say the intellectual, the critical, or the official hearer. Such a practice does exclude the many, for the motive is to please the elect rather than to minister to the mass. Not that single persons may not loom large in the consciousness of the preacher during the delivery of his sermon ; indeed, such a consciousness helps the entire audience as well as the preacher. Great preachers frequently speak of the inspiration gained from the presence of some obscure man or woman, a saint of God, sitting in the front pew. Please excuse a personal incident. In my home circuit, in the principal church, there was a man of fine character and a splendid hearer, but shrewd and critical withal. As I journeyed to preach in his church visions of this man rose before me. I feared his presence, wondered if he would be there, half-hoping he would not ; but when on entering the pulpit I found him away I was conscious of a big disappointment, and there was a considerable fall in my emotional thermometer. Such a man is a God-send to both preacher and congregation.

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2. Begin to prepare in good time. Preparation must not be crowded into the last few hours of the week, nor even into the last day. A pulpit genius may be able to do this. Mr. Spurgeon and H. W. Beecher did it; but geniuses are few and far between. The ordinary man must begin early, and it is a misunderstanding of divine methods to expect that the Holy Ghost is going to make up to the preacher on the Saturday what he neglected to do on the Monday. Especially is it wise to fix the subject and text early in the week, so that the mind may ruminate upon them. Put them to soak as the gardener does the peas he is going to sow, in order that sprouting may begin before the planting is done. Psychologists tell us that the larger region of the mind is the subconscious, and that much work is done here unconsciously which afterwards rises to the surface. Let the theme drop into these depths early, where it will float about, coming occasionally to the top, as the fishes come up for air, and it will be found when taken out and examined that progress has been made. If thus submerged early, although a thousand other activities are occupying the upper consciousness, crowding it down, this embryonic thought-child will persist and automatically grow. Sleep is a proof that cerebration proceeds automatically, for not only are fresh ideas given during the hours of slumber, but a whole series of ideas; and preachers like Mr. Spurgeon tell us that some of their best sermons have been dreamed. Robert Louis Steven-

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son informs us that some of his best and more striking romances were given to him in dream-form. He speaks of the suggestions as coming from his 'little people,' who gave him his stories night by night and piece by piece. 'That part of my work which is done while I am sleeping is the Brownies' part beyond contention; but that which is done when I am up and about is by no means necessarily mine, since all goes to show the Brownies have a hand in it even then.' To call such messengers 'Brownies' is to speak poetically; scientifically speaking it was the subconscious mind working automatically. If we will only believe it, allow it to do so, give it the suggestion, and make an early deposit, this deeper self will do much more for us than we know, and so relevant will its work be found that when reason comes to go over the ground there will be much to accept and little to throw away.

3. Lastly, preparation must be thorough. The subject must be conscientiously worked at—worked at as honestly as the farmer works at his field, and the artist at his picture. The preacher must put his best into every sermon, his best reading and thinking. Never get the idea that you can produce anything too good for your people. Never despise an audience, especially a country audience, which townspeople are apt to do. Respect your audience, trust it, believe in its receptive capacity, for the best you can give is never too good. I have been astonished at the capacity of a comparatively unlettered audience to

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receive strong food, and have rejoiced to find how much a good sermon is appreciated. People who are not able to speak a sentence correctly, and quite unable to reproduce an argument, can, in spite of this, understand and appreciate a strong sermon—that is to say, if the preacher puts his thoughts clearly. I once heard a sermon upon the text, ‘I will not offer unto the Lord of that which costs me nothing,’ a resolution that was sadly contradicted by the sermon. Thoroughness involves writing, constant and careful, for where this is not persistently followed up preparation is usually neglected and the preaching slipshod.

(1) Writing reveals the thinker to himself. He cannot rightly value the quality of his thought until he reduces it to paper. We may have an idea that our thinking is fairly strong and clear while it remains unexpressed, or is expressed in conversation; but we shall get another idea when it becomes writing or is reduced to cold type. Then it is revealed that we have not been thinking at all, but dreaming or idly imagining. Putting thoughts on paper is like having our photograph taken and held up before our eyes: we then see what manner of man we are; our mental face is there, pimples and all. Writing fosters, if it does not compel, clear thinking. The putting of ideas on paper is a self-revelation, and one of the finest possible mental disciplines.

(2) It helps to tame and regulate our thinking. It puts the bit into its mouth, keeping it from

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running away, guiding it about the beaten track, making the mind tractable and the servant of the will. It tends also to fix and stereotype thought, and to save the preacher from looseness and redundancy in style.

(3) It also develops a literary style, which may possibly give the preacher a wider influence and a larger audience through the publication of his sermons in the weekly press or in book-form, and in addition leads on to other possible literary work. Some of our leading writers first learned the secret by the practice of writing their sermons.

(4) Writing also assists the preservation of the preacher's material. At least some of his material has in it an element of permanence, which unless written will be lost, and valuable thoughts will vanish altogether, or be recalled only at considerable cost of labour and time.

Of course writing must follow and not precede thinking. The plan of the sermon must be clearly defined and well thought out before pen is put to paper in any literary sense. It is a bad practice to begin writing as soon as text and subject are chosen, and before an outline is formed, spinning away as a spider spins its web, the result being a loosely jointed production without continuity, compactness, or strength. Nor should writing out once be considered sufficient, especially for a minister who changes his sphere often, as a Methodist does. It would be well for him to rewrite his sermons on each fresh circuit he removes to—i.e. those sermons that

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he wishes to retain and are worth retaining. If he does not do this, he at least should carefully revise what he writes, omitting, adding, correcting, so that not only the thought but the very words may be apposite and carry their proper weight.

I have spoken of preparation as if success depended entirely upon the preacher. Inspiration from without is promised and may be realized, but it comes more effectively to those who have prepared best for its coming. The artist is the subject of inspiration when he conceives and executes a great picture, but years of preparation have preceded the finished task. People look at the picture with wide eyes, exclaiming, 'What a genius the painter must be! he must surely be inspired.' Yes, but how little do they know of what has gone before, of the years of practice and self-discipline.

'Genius,' says Carlyle, 'is an infinite capacity for taking pains.' This at least is mainly true, and of none is it more true than of the preacher. Therefore *Prepare, Prepare*, and again I say *Prepare*.

III

The Choice of Subject and Text

IT is sometimes thought that Subject and Text are interchangeable terms and involve each other; but, while closely related, they are quite distinct, for a preacher may have a text and be minus a subject, or he may have a subject and yet be without a text, or may find in a single text many subjects. As to the query which should be first sought, text or subject, no definite answer can be given, for it is sometimes a text that first arrests; on the other hand, it may be a subject that first seizes us, and a text embodying the idea has to be sought. Perhaps usually the subject and the text leap into the mind simultaneously, the one being involved in and suggested by the other.

I. *The Subject.*

1. Be sure that it is a subject and not a mere fragment of one; that it is not a few loose ideas flitting through the mind; that it contains a truth and not a mere 'angle of truth,' and that there is substance enough in it from which to make a sermon. Young preachers are in danger here—in danger of laying foundations too narrow for their

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proposed building, and of finding by the time they finish that they have built a pyramid on its apex ; a structure that is top-heavy, toppling to the ground. Therefore, changing the figure, when you choose your pond be sure that it is deep enough to swim in. Some preachers mistake the duck-pond for a lake ; and so, no matter how great may be their swimming ability, all they can do is to paddle about. Very often, when toiling at a subject, we have found that it would not work ; that no progress was being made. We blamed our own stupidity, our lack of initiative, whereas the cause lay, as we have since discovered, in the poverty and narrowness of the subject. Truth is a great river, deep and strong enough to carry big craft. It has also many tributaries up which small boats only can ply. Take care not to get into one of these ; beware of being 'creeked,' and keep to the main stream and to the deep waters.

2. Let the subject be clearly defined and definitely limited. It frequently happens that subjects widely different lie near each other, and it is quite easy to slide from one into another ; consequently if the preacher is not on the alert he will find himself dealing with two, and probably with two diverse subjects at once. The result of this will be confusion of thought and an enfeebled impression, for the one tends to neutralize the effect of the other. It is like mixing paraffin with machine oil ; the paraffin reduces the lubricating qualities of the oil, and the oil the illuminating properties of the paraffin.

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Or, the mixing of subjects and trying to deal with several of them in one sermon is like using a shotgun instead of a bullet rifle ; it hits more objects, but is less deadly ; the one wounds, the other kills. A sermon to be certain in its results must have one central idea looked at from all possible aspects ; the sermon which is most likely to be effective is that in which the single idea is developed, illustrated, and illuminated. The half-hour at the preacher's disposal is too short and precious to be used up in a discursive and diffusive way. Having selected the subject, be faithful to it. Don Quixote's advice to his puppet showman was, 'Go on with your story, and don't run into curves and slants.' Refuse to be tempted into by-ways, no matter how alluring and pleasant. It was a poor excuse made by a preacher for his roamings—'a sinner goes rambling, and here goes after him.'

3. Choose great subjects, do business in great themes. Don't be pedlars selling laces and pins, but merchants dealing in the gems of the kingdom. Deal with great problems, arresting and thought-provoking for preacher and people. Don't bring class-room exegetics into the pulpit and discuss the meaning of the 'horns' and the 'beasts' in the Book of Revelation, nor trouble to tell the people what twenty different commentators have to say upon the pomegranates that hung from the fringe of Aaron's robe. What do the people care about these things? They cry for bread ; shall we give them a stone? They ask for a lamp to guide

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them; do not offer them a box of lucifer matches. Life is fraught with great issues. Opportunities are few, and there is no time to deal with little topics — 'with the side-issues of life and the bric-à-brac of theology.' Hand over Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dum to the care of the entertainer and the clown; you have more serious business on hand. No true minister refrains from attacking great subjects. He may shrink from doing so, he may do it very imperfectly; but do it he must and will. We hear it said sometimes of a preacher — 'he had this morning a subject too big for him.' This is praiseworthy rather than a discredit. If he is mastered by it to-day, he will triumph to-morrow; while the man who never attacks any other than an easy subject, whose mental muscles are never strained, whose spiritual brow is never stained, will remain to the end a weakling and a purveyor of weak pabulum. There is no niche in the Pantheon for him; he must dwell in the lowlands with the slime of the commonplace upon him. Make your work a 'fresco rather than a photograph.' What a world of difference there is between these productions! The one embodies a great idea, a piece of history, an epoch-making circumstance in a nation's life; the other is an ephemeral reflection. Gentlemen, deal in higher art than snapshots and 'sticky-backs'; let your aim be to express great facts, events, and ideas. The great preachers of the Church have done this; *vide* the published sermons of Spurgeon, Beecher, and Phillips Brooks. I think I hear you

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say, 'But such themes are limited, and are very soon exhausted.' This view, however, experience will disprove. But if you find it to be really so, go over the ground again. If a man has only a dozen sermons on great subjects which really grip him, and are to him of immense importance, he will not be without an audience, nor lack seals to his ministry.

May I here say a word upon the use of sensational subjects? By sensational subjects I do not mean such as arouse feeling in the hearers. There is a true as there is a false sensationalism. If the impulses stirred are good, and the emotion be a movement towards a higher life, then the more sensation the better. The gospel committed to us appeals to the heart; it is calculated to stir the emotions deeply, and under the preaching of the Master Himself there were sensational results. But by the term I mean an appeal to the lower tastes and motives of the people by preaching upon, say, the newspaper sensation of the week; the happenings of the police-court, divorce-court, or cricket field; and announcing such catchy titles as 'What'll Win?' 'The Matchless Cleanser,' 'He Won't be Happy till he Gets it,' &c. Good things might be said under such headings, but they degrade the sacred office and appeal to motives that cannot end in much good—appeal to curiosity and love of novelty rather than to any desire to know the truth.

4. The choice must be varied. Our natural inclinations will lead to the choice of certain kinds

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of subjects in preference to others. But personal predilection must not be the sole arbiter, for there will be many subjects needing treatment towards which we have no bent. Because we like best to encourage saints we have no release from the duty of warning sinners ; or because we revel in the terrors of the law that is no reason why we should not preach on 'God is Love.' Therefore our choice must be as varied as the truths we are called to deliver and the needs of the people who listen. First things, however, must come first. Gospel subjects must have the precedence ; our message must be in the first instance an evangel, and the spirit of that evangel must saturate every theme. Of course the evangelical character of a sermon is not determined by the passage of Scripture upon which it is based, but upon its tone. A sermon may be evangelical in form, interlarded with gospel epithets and phrases, and yet not be evangelical in spirit ; and on the other hand, a discourse may not mention the name of Jesus, and yet be Christly in tone. The tone of Christian preaching must be evangelical. Gospel themes should not only be present, but prominent—the Incarnation, sin, redemption, repentance, faith, sacrifice, judgement, eternal life. Themes such as these are imperative, and it is such as they that give altitude, vastness, and strength to our ministry. Of course many other subjects are permissible ; subjects suggested by many circumstances—the needs of the people, the children, the aged, the rich, the poor, the suffering, and the sinning. If a minister keeps his

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eyes open there will be no dearth of subjects ; there may appear to be so at first, but eventually the difficulty will be, not how to find a subject, but how to deal with the many that press upon him for treatment. These, of course, cannot all be taken up at once, therefore the more insistent must be listened to ; the turn of the others will come. A choice will frequently be helped by noting passing events of moral importance—national, social, municipal—and by recalling the conditions and circumstances of individual members of the congregation. You see in the back pew the young man who spoke to you about his doubts the other day, and a sermon upon ‘Unbelief and its Antidote’ is suggested. Near by there sits a youth slipping away from good by reading questionable books. The fact suggests a sermon on ‘Pernicious Literature.’ Problems raised in the Bible-class, the social Guild, the literary society will be found opulent in suitable themes. The festivals of the Church too are suggestive—Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide—while the sacraments should have due attention. If a minister will look around he will not want for apposite and suitable topics, nor lack variety in his themes.

5. The choice of subject must be subordinate to the aim. The first question is, ‘What is my purpose in the service ? what do I wish to accomplish ? Is it to build up believers or arouse sinners ; to encourage or instruct, to warn or inspire ?’ Having settled the purpose, the subject chosen must be such as will secure this end most readily and efficiently.

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II. The Text.

It has been customary for at least the past six hundred years to base the sermon on some selected passage of Scripture, usually upon a verse or part of a verse. The whole question, however, of preaching from a text in this way has to be reconsidered owing to new views concerning the Bible. Biblical criticism, especially Old Testament criticism, is affecting the practice (if not undermining it) of basing a sermon upon an isolated portion of Scripture. Criticism has not only affected the arrangement of the books of the Bible, but has shown that much that was thought to be history is allegory, and much that was regarded as sober prose turns out to be poetry. Moreover, it has demonstrated that much of the Old Testament teaching was relative and so transitory. It has demolished for ever the theory of verbal inspiration, and with it has had to go the practice of building doctrines upon single texts. At one time the vowel-points of the Hebrew Bible were considered inspired ; how much more, then, the words and sentences ! The Bible was regarded as inspired alike in all its parts, and so as of equal authority and of equal service ; the Old Testament as vital and edifying as the New ; Ecclesiastes as much inspired as the Gospel of John. Such views gave to any text, taken at random from any part, an *ex-cathedra* character. Criticism has undone all this. But while such is the case, it has not robbed the preacher even of the Old Testament as a sermonic source, but has given it to him as a much larger, broader, and authori-

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tative Book. 'Criticism has rediscovered the Bible, as Luther rediscovered the gospel,' and, as Dr. G. A. Smith has shown, the Old Testament may still be a fruitful source of sermon-matter. The treatment of it as a volume of religious 'tit-bits' must be abandoned ; still, in broad outline it is, excepting the New Testament, the greatest religious book in the world. It can be no longer credited that God acted in exactly the manner frequently described there ; yet that He was at work in the various crises of Israel's history, revealing Himself in many ways, is certain. Why, for instance, did the Israelites, of all the Semitic tribes, become monotheists ? No other conclusion can be reached than that it was by the revelation of God Himself in the heart of the nation. This fact is 'writ large' on the pages of most of the books, and yields rich results to the preacher. The writings of the prophets, too, are a deep mine of wealth for ethical discourses, and for sermons on the social propaganda and service. How wonderfully modern they are in tone, and how closely in touch with the present-day enthusiasm for humanity ! And the preacher, eager for social reform, cannot do better than go to them for his inspiration and for texts for his sermons. Criticism is forcing the preacher to draw his instruction from the main drift and general teaching of the books rather than from isolated texts and passages, except in so far as such texts epitomize the broader teaching. The Old Testament text must take a wider sweep if it is to retain its authoritative character ; separate passages

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and sentences are robbed of their 'Thus saith the Lord.' But what is taken away from the letter is doubly returned in spirit.

Of course there is no absolute necessity to take a text at all, for a good gospel sermon may be made and preached without one. But the practice has great advantages.

1. It furnishes an effective centre for a discourse, and acts as a germ around which the sermon-organism may grow, and prevents the discourse from becoming a mere piece of machinery.

2. It gives to the sermon an added note of authority. For Protestants the Bible is the arch-religious authority, as the Church is for Roman Catholics. Its records are the experiences of men who have heard the voice of God in a superlative degree, hence words based upon them have a distinct warrant. People of the Reformed Faith pay little heed to the voice of the Church, while that of the individual preacher is too human. It is the voice from the Word they wait for. Hence preaching directly based upon some selected portion of it possesses a heightened sanction and unique authority.

3. The text also gives a greater variety to the preacher's messages. Consequently there is a many-sidedness about his utterances that greatly adds to their interest and effect.

III. *The Choice of a Text.*—Practically all the rules laid down for the choice of subjects apply to the choice of texts, but there are four others that may be added.

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1. Texts should be chosen with care. There should be no haphazard method, such as preaching from the first passage that strikes the eye upon opening the Bible—a practice savouring more of magic than common sense. Nor is it wise to preach from texts that some one else has chosen for us. It is pleasing to be asked by some member of the congregation to preach on a given text. 'There is a text I should so much like you to preach from—"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence"; I am sure that *you* could throw much light upon that difficult passage.' Such a request is subtly flattering, and the temptation is to yield; but if it is not a text that appeals to you, or one upon which the Holy Spirit has not set His seal, give it a wide berth. A man must preach from texts that God gives him, and these seldom come through the lips of flattering, curious, would-be listeners.

2. Choose suitable texts. That is, texts that suit the subject, the bias of your own mind, the object in view, and the occasion; not a sad one for a festive season, nor a bright one for a mournful occasion. It is not enough to utter the truth, but it should be spoken at the right time and in the right place.

Here let me say that merely odd texts are never suitable, or scarcely ever. For example: 'Old shoes and clouted,' 'I had three white baskets upon my head,' 'The Lord showed me four carpenters.' The motive in their use may be pure enough—there may be a sincere wish to arrest attention and to give

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through these strange passages a scrap of holy truth ; but the effect of such tricks is small and passing, while some even deal in them to show the people how clever the preacher is—how he can get something out of nothing ; on a par with the conjurer who puts a piece of paper into the hat, and brings from somewhere—but certainly not out of the hat—not the bit of paper, but a beautiful bird. How smart and clever it all is !

3. Choose well-used texts. The fact that they have been much used is proof that there is something in them, that they have appealed to both preacher and hearer in the past. Yet it is possible to over-do even this ; for instance, a local preacher once said to me, 'A capital text to take when you are in a corner is, "What saith the Scriptures?"' But avoiding extremes, be bold enough to use the well-worn text. Young men especially are apt to think that they will be charged with lack of originality if they do this, and so they go out into the by-ways of the Word. This is a mistake, as I have found from experience. When I entered the ministry I was very anxious to be original and effective, so amongst others I made a sermon on the text, 'Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth, and he said Sibboleth,' and another on 'Ephraim is a cake unturned.' I thought everybody was preaching on the 'Prodigal Son' and 'God so loved the world,' and I determined to get out of the ruts and preach on 'Shibboleth' and 'cakes.' I soon found out, however, that few people

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cared for my nice linguistic distinctions, and nobody wanted my cakes, so I turned to the strong meat of the Word, and have tried to purvey it ever since. I found that 'oddities did not last,' and that what the people wanted was sermons on great texts, even if the sermons themselves were not great. I have come to see that the originality must be in the man and not in the text, which needs to be a portion of the 'old, old story.' Have the courage to be antiquated. 'Dare to be singular.' Yes; but also dare to be commonplace, and to tread the beaten way.

4. Allow a text to find you. Upon such our best sermons have been made, and these are they which live in our own hearts and with the people; only as a text grips us is it likely to be effective. Mr. Spurgeon, in a bit of autobiography, says: 'Almost every Saturday in my life I make enough outlines of sermons, if I felt at liberty to preach them, to last me for a month, but I no more dare use them than an honest mariner would run to shore a cargo of contraband goods.' Texts that find us are most likely to be discovered as we read the Bible devotionally; a passage that comes with balm and power to our own souls is more likely to carry healing to others. That which helps the preacher personally will be most likely to help his people.

Texts that thus leap up from the page are more than can be immediately used. Yet they are too valuable to be lost, therefore they should be carefully garnered and preserved. For this purpose

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a book should be kept and entries made of texts that arrest, adding any thoughts occurring at the time or upon subsequent reflection. Dr. Wendell Holmes tells us that Emerson kept a notebook of subjects suitable for lectures or essays, and thoughts upon them, and called the book his 'Savings Bank.' If preachers would follow a similar practice with their texts, there would be little need to go in search of them when wanted for use; there would be plenty ready to hand with material enough for a sermon. Nothing further would be needed but a little rearrangement and development. It is both a time-saving and enriching method. Usually such themes are those that best fit our own type of mind and personal predilections; and to follow personal leanings is quite legitimate, providing the practice is balanced by a due consideration for the needs of others. These two things should act and react, mutually checking each other, yet uniting to give life, freshness, and power to our utterances. No man will make a bad choice of a text who follows his own heart, and who, at the same time, cries out in prayer, 'O Lord, show me what my people need; guide me into those pastures wherein I can gather the best and richest food for my flock.'

IV

The Treatment of a Text

HAVING chosen the subject and text, the next step is to decide upon the way the sermon should be developed. A text may be treated in several different ways.

I. It may be treated *expositorily* or *exegetically*. Exposition, too, may follow various lines. It may be analytical and detailed, as when a passage is broken up into its different phrases and words, taking them one by one, explaining their meaning and relation to other phrases and words. This is the method of the anatomist, whose business it is to dissect, disintegrate, and analyse the different parts of the body, and then to show the connexion between these parts and functions, and how they work together as a whole. Take, for example, the classic passage from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God.' The subject is 'The inseparableness of the Christian believer from the love of God,' and the expositor will dwell upon the divisive character of the several

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things mentioned—death, life, angels, &c.—showing how unable they are to divide the soul that is in Christ from the divine love. The text also may be treated theologically, and made the basis of the doctrine of Assurance, or it may be used to show how the human and divine are made one in Jesus, but in neither of these latter cases would it be exposition, much less analytical exposition. Another illustration, and still clearer, is that of making the separate words and phrases of a text the several heads or divisions, as, for example: (1) 'Rejoicing in hope; (2) Patient in tribulation; (3) Continuing instant in prayer.' Here the analysis is automatic.

The danger of the analytical form of exposition is that it will run out into wearisome detail, tithing the 'mint, anise, and cummin,' and neglecting the weightier matters of the law. An expository preacher will, usually, be a teacher, but he must watch that he does not become tedious. This danger, however, is discounted by avoiding the analytical method, and treating the text in a more general way. As, for example, the text, 'He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich,' might be expounded thus: Firstly, 'The riches of Christ'; secondly, 'The sacrifice of Christ'; thirdly, 'The benefits resulting to the world.' Such a line of thought is truly expository, but being more general it is less likely to become technical and tedious than the method of analysing the separate words. Of course exposition may take a still wider sweep and deal with, say, a whole book

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of the Bible, as, for example, the Book of Ruth or the Book of Esther, where one main lesson is the object ; or with a number of separate passages scattered here and there in different books yet having a definite connexion, as, for example, 'The silences of Jesus and their significance.' Such a sermon would naturally pick up selections from the four Gospels, the preacher showing the setting and meaning of each. This would be as truly exposition as if a single passage were selected. Perhaps, on the whole, the expository method is to be preferred before every other, for it has the great advantage of leading both preacher and hearer into the real meaning of the Scriptures, and into a wider understanding of their message. People who do not read the Bible at home with any understanding come to see by this method its beauty and power.

Expository preaching, then, is a necessity, and at the same time a difficulty. It is difficult because people know their Bibles so little and so superficially. Green the historian, speaking of the Puritan age, says, 'The nation became a people of one book,' the Bible. But all this is reversed. People do not read their Bibles to-day, consequently allusions to Bible passages are not understood as they were formerly. There is no mistake more frequently made by a preacher than to suppose that what is familiar to him is familiar to the people. This may seem strange when almost every man and woman in the land has passed through a day school where the Bible is read and often taught ; also many

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of them have been in Sunday-school classes ; yet the ignorance of the Bible is lamentable. It is necessary that the preacher make all his references to the Scriptures simple and clear—'line upon line'—even though it may appear superfluous and be irksome to himself. But this very fact makes expository preaching a necessity. If the people are ignorant of the Word they are great losers, they are religiously the poorer. The needs of the people demand that exposition bulk most largely in the minister's preaching. Perhaps the best modern examples of this class of preaching are Drs. Mac-laren and Campbell Morgan.

II. Then the text may be treated *doctrinally*. A text, as well as yielding practical exposition, may contain also a germinal doctrine, e.g. the Apostolic Benediction—'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c.—may be expressed thus: (1) Grace, (2) Love, (3) Fellowship ; and it might equally well form the foundation of a sermon on the doctrine of the Trinity. Doctrinal preaching is, however, out of vogue to-day. People are saying, 'We don't want bones—give us sermons with flesh on them ; we want something we can eat and drink, not an empty plate and a cup without water.' Such an attitude is partly the result of the age in which we live, a shallow age, and averse to stiff and deep thinking, and moreover anti-theological if not anti-religious. But it may also arise in part from the preacher's habit of discussing Christian doctrines in a too technical way, by introducing the methods of the

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class-room into the pulpit, and presenting to the people a skeleton truth without warmth and life. The doctrinal preacher must avoid doctrinal subtleties : such problems as supra-lapsarianism and infra-lapsarianism ; Creationism and Traducianism, i.e. whether the soul is a direct creation or is transmitted like the body ; and such questions as the eternal Filiation of the Son.

These, and similar subjects, are for the college-hall and debating class, not for the pulpit. Yet no preacher can afford to ignore doctrine. Let people call it bones if they like ; but what sort of a body would that be which had no bones ? Doctrines are nothing less than the fundamental truths of our holy religion ; it is these formulated and developed, and Christ cannot be preached in all His fullness without involving doctrine. Preaching Christ carries with it a certain conception of His Person and work, of His divinity, humanity, and saviourhood ; and these involve other doctrines, such as sin, salvation, judgement, death, and eternal life. To heed the cry against doctrine is to undermine the foundations of the faith, and to rob Christianity of its substance and strength. As modern examples of doctrinal preaching, I know nothing better than the sermons of Dr. Dale. They are no mere skeletons, but discourses with a breathing, glowing, throbbing, living message. He began his favourite method soon after settling in Birmingham as co-pastor with John Angell James, who was largely a topical preacher. Some one said to him, 'The

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Carr's Lane people won't stand doctrinal preaching.' His reply was, 'But they will have to stand it.' And they did stand it, and delighted to do so. But it was doctrinal *preaching*, not theological lecturing—a fact which made all the difference.

'No preaching ever had any strong power that was not the preaching of doctrine. The preachers that have held and moved men have always preached doctrine. No exhortation to a good life that does not put behind it some truth as deep as eternity can seize and hold the conscience.' Then preach doctrine, but do so not that men may believe it only, 'but that men may be saved by believing it' (Phillips Brooks). Dr. Dale, of course, did not always follow this method, nor should any preacher. But a sermon or a course of doctrinal sermons periodically, is a necessity both for preacher and hearer. It will help to keep the preacher's religious thinking robust and clear, for what a man tries to make clear to others becomes clearer to his own mind. It also will help the congregation; for an occasional sermon on 'Repentance,' 'Faith,' 'Assurance,' 'Sanctification' will not only instruct, but lead the people into a more intelligent Christian faith and life. However, in preaching doctrine avoid theological terminology.

III. A text may also be treated *topically*. Topical preaching is permissible, providing always that the topic is a Christian one, and of real and abiding value to the hearer—a topic that will not merely amuse and excite curiosity, but instruct and inspire.

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Also, further, a topic is only admissible when it can be legitimately deduced from the passage used. If the text will not bear the construction the preacher wishes to put upon it, nor allow the inferences he wishes to draw, let him choose another, or not use one at all, and give what he has to say in the form of an address. This will be far more honest, and therefore more likely to be effective.

A text may be treated topically in several different ways. The treatment may be distinctly religious, as, for example, 'He wist not that his face did shine,' the topic being 'The effect of communion with God upon the physical man,' showing that it (1) Controls, (2) Transforms, and (3) Transfigures—reflections that are definitely religious in character. Then the topic may take upon itself a philosophical cast. Suppose the text is, 'The Lion of the tribe of Judah . . . hath prevailed to open the book' (Rev. v. 5), the topic may be 'Christ the interpretation of the universe,' and might be worked out thus : (1) Christ unseals the Book of Nature ; (2) He unseals the Book of History ; (3) He unlocks the Book of Religion ; (4) He unseals the Book of the Individual Life. Most social subjects have to be treated topically, and it would be quite legitimate to preach a sermon, say, on International Arbitration from the text 'Blessed are the Peacemakers,' or upon the Drink Question from 'Now Barabbas was a robber.' But to preach a sermon on the topic of mental equipment from the text, 'And will show you an upper room furnished,' is an abuse of the practice, for

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the topic is not in the text at all. The topical method has several distinct advantages. For one thing it tends to secure a greater variety in preaching, and so to keep the interest of a congregation. Also, it tends to give greater unity to a discourse. An exposition may include quite a number of ideas, legitimately drawn from the text, yet quite disconnected; but when a text is treated topically, there is no such danger, and unity, as we shall see later, is no small factor in pulpit effectiveness.

IV. Still further, a text may be treated *logically*, or by means of a series of propositions worked out as the heads of a sermon. This class of sermon might be described as that which shows the reason of things. Preachers with metaphysical inclinations will indulge in this method; but there is just this danger for them, that they will follow it too exclusively, and refine what should be a sermon into a philosophical subtlety or metaphysical disquisition. The school-men of the Middle Ages revelled in puzzles, such as, 'How many angels can dance on the point of a needle?' but, needless to say, they never settled the problem. The people of to-day will not stand such subtle refinements.

But there is an allowable method which, if followed, will not repel, but will call out the reasoning powers of the preacher, and appeal to the reason of the audience. Take the text, 'What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?' as an example, which may be set out in these propositions: (1) Man is a being of lowly origin; (2) He is a being of lofty

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ideals ; (3) He is a being capable of development ; (4) He is a being cared for by the Higher Powers. Each of these assertions would have to be supported by arguments drawn from natural science, psychology, history, and experience. This class of preaching, no doubt, calls for a vigorous constitution both in congregation and preacher. Possibly the cry will be heard, 'Why does not the minister preach Christ? why does he not give us the simple gospel?' which usually means that the people do not want to think. This demand for simplicity is three-fourths laziness both on the part of preacher and people ; they do not wish to be disturbed in their ease, nor to be torn from the slumber of their idleness. But, on the other hand, the preacher will always discover a fair contingent that can rejoice in strong meat.

I have found that few things really interest people more than an argument—at least this is true of men, and especially in the Northern section of the country. This is probably because they are used to argument in the workshop, the mill, the mine, and at the street-corner, and so have become used to propositional discussion. Consequently when the same methods are adopted in the pulpit, there is much appreciation. And are not the truths of the gospel capable of being presented in this way? Are they not at their base rational? Are they not profound truths—many of them deep and difficult to understand, requiring painstaking inquiry? To discover them there can be no other way than that

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of earnest thought ; there is no other clue to the labyrinth ; there is no patent or easy way to obtain an understanding of them. Ruskin says that 'the Christianity which cannot be taught to a child is not of its essence.' That is only a half-truth. There is much in our great religion that a child can fathom, but there are also deeps in it that the profoundest intellect has not yet plumbed. But on this account there is no need for dullness. The philosophical preacher, if he be a man of clear head and warm heart, will not be dull. There is such a thing as logic on fire, it may be shot through with emotion ; and when these two are combined the impact is practically irresistible. Dr. Chalmers's preaching was cast in a philosophical mould, yet it was saturated with feeling ; it was measured and deep, yet there was in it a glow that made him one of the greatest preachers of his age and country. If any of you have the philosophical bent, do not crush but cultivate it, for it, too, can be placed on the altar of service ; but at the same time make it molten through the fire of an intense and glowing sympathy.

V. Lastly, a text may be treated *allegorically* ; i.e. a spiritual meaning may be extracted from it that does not appear at first sight, or belong to its surface or exoteric meaning. This method has had great vogue in the Church at certain periods. Most of the Fathers accepted and adopted it as the chief principle of Bible interpretation. The question arises, How far is a preacher justified in adopting

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the method? Of course no modern teacher could follow the practice in its extreme form, as, for example, saying that the 'inn' in the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' means the Church, and the 'two-pence' the two sacraments, and so forth. Such spiritualizing is arrant nonsense. When it is used so as to do violence to the evident meaning of a passage, when employed simply as a means to bolster up the theory of verbal inspiration, and when it reads back into practically every Old Testament text New Testament truth, it cannot be commended. There is, however, a sense in which the method is permissible, when it is used to extract a real and deeper meaning from the text than appears on the surface. It is true that a text, in the first instance, must be interpreted grammatically and historically, and in harmony with its context and general setting. But after this has been done there remains an undiscovered depth into which spiritual insight only can enter, and from which it brings truths as real as any that might be obtained exegetically. Not only Scripture, but almost every object around us, has a series of meanings descending deeper and deeper from the surface.

Nature can be interpreted esoterically, as well as scientifically. He who sees sun and stars only under the telescope has not discovered their full meaning. The botanist has not exhausted the meaning of the 'little flower.' Light, to take another example, can be discussed from the point of view of physics, and also from an astronomical aspect, and still further

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from the point of view of purpose in the world, thus passing from a deeper to a still deeper meaning. History furnishes another illustration. It can be studied from the standpoint of facts and events—battles and reigns of kings and queens; but such would be a very unsatisfactory and inadequate view, for ‘facts are but the bones of history.’ Behind these are deeper movements and meanings requiring the historical imagination to give them their real interpretation and true setting.

Poetry is still another example. What is this, when it is of the highest order, but a deeper insight into the world of nature and man? The true poet is a spiritual seer—one who sees what ordinary men do not see; and it is this deeper look which is usually the truer, for the poets, like the prophets, have led the people into the heart of things.

The spiritualizing preacher too does similarly; he differs from the expositor who sets forth the grammatical and historical meaning of the text with any lessons it may teach, and leads his listeners into subtler depths which are no less, but probably more, true. As an illustration of this method may I refer to a sermon which I heard Mr. Spurgeon preach twenty-five years ago on a text from the Song of Solomon, ‘Thy companions hear thy voice; cause me to hear it.’ His point was that God desired human fellowship, and was pained when it was not given. ‘You talk with others; have you no desire, nor time, to talk with Me?’ Expositorily the text is a human love-plea, probably of a youthful king

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with the girl he would make his wife, and the surface deduction would be that the soul of man longs for love-fellowship, and pines when it is not expressed ; but Mr. Spurgeon went deeper than either interpretation, and in this he did rightly, for all true human love and longing have their full expression in God, from whom all human love springs.

We are familiar with this type of preaching in sermons on the march of the Israelites, and upon the serpent lifted up by Moses. It must, however, be admitted that the higher criticism of the Bible has interfered with this method of sermonizing ; it has forbidden the reading back of New Testament truths into Old Testament conditions. The older allegorists found Christ in almost every text, which is inadmissible. But while it has robbed the preacher of this, it has shown him a more excellent way ; it shows him the SPIRIT of Christ in the Old Testament, and by seeking to extract this the preacher is able to bring out Christ from the older Scriptures in a more effective way than the allegorists ever could. What forbearing love does the prophecy of Hosea reveal ! What a fine universalism is manifested in the Book of Jonah ! It no longer yields sermons on the burial and resurrection of Jesus ; but it anticipates the teaching of Jesus, that God is more merciful than man, and that heathen nations and peoples are precious in His sight. The Books of Job and Ruth have also a true New Testament message. Criticism has ruined the old method, but has given more than it has taken away, and in a

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form at once more rational and convincing: Following the newer track, the spiritualizing method is legitimate, and the preacher will find it, although somewhat antiquated, a helpful way of conveying truth.

In conclusion, the question arises as to which of these methods is the best, and should any one of them be exclusively followed? The answer is that each will be found best in its turn. Doubtless a preacher's natural inclinations will lead him to follow one method rather than another; but in this, as in other things, leanings must not be the sole guide. If he is to keep up interest, he must use, like the instrumentalist, different stops, as well as play different tunes. 'It may be well to-day to preach on an intellectual theme by an analytical process, and on the following Sunday on an intellectual theme by a synthetic process . . . a didactic sermon is all the stronger if it stands out in strong contrast with the sermon on the feelings. If you have preached to-day to the heart through the imagination, preach to-morrow to the heart through the reason' (Beecher). Ring the changes as variedly as possible, and sometimes let all the bells clang together. By this I mean that a sermon may combine each method; in it there may be something of exposition, doctrine, argument, and spiritual suggestion which may be made to blend without destroying the unity. Of course it is well for a man to 'cultivate his strong side.' If his gifts lie along the line of exposition, then let him cultivate expository

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preaching ; if in the direction of doctrine, then let him cultivate that side. But while this is permissible he must cultivate, in a subordinate degree, every possible method (and combination of method) of presentation and appeal—use every possible string in the harp and every available pipe in the organ.

V

The Collection and Distribution of Material

I. **B**Y the phrase '*collection of material*' something else is meant than that general gathering-up which is going on through the mind's ordinary and every-day activities. The mind is constantly out on foraging expeditions, filling its store-house from many fields—Bible study, general reading, travel, observation ; but the phrase is used here to mean a much more concentrated and specific act—the selection out of such stores material needed for a particular sermon. The bee is all through the summer out in the field and garden, passing from flower to flower, gathering up honey and bearing it home in the evening to its hive ; but there comes a time when it turns in upon its garnered store, and takes from well-filled cells food to meet its present needs. This, in a figure, is what the preacher does. In every new sermon he visits his cells and takes out part of that which he has gathered in. Of course it is legitimate for him to go around to other hives—to original texts, commentaries, and other men's sermons. But this

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is not primary. His first task is to enter the archives of his own mind—perception, memory, imagination—and to bring therefrom ‘things new and old.’ The rhetoricians call this process ‘invention.’ The word as applied to homiletics is not the best, for it gives the impression that the materials of a sermon are something spun out of the preacher’s mind, as the spider spins its web out of its own body, and that there is something not quite real about the production. If this be so, then the term is inappropriate, for the truths the preacher deals in are not fine-spun fancies, but precious realities.

But, on the other hand, invention for the preacher is a mental activity without which the sermon is impossible. It is a recreative process, and at the same time selective. It gives life to ideas lying latent in the mind, and calls such of them forth as will suit the preacher’s purpose. Its effect is that of a magnet passed through a mixed mass of material which gathers out all the bits of iron and steel, selecting that for which it has affinity, leaving the rest behind. Dropping the figure, the preacher having chosen his subject and text, the next step is to set experience, memory, and imagination, especially the last, to work in order to find something to say about them. The inventive faculty is larger and more active in some than in others, is more active in the same person at one time than another, and is helped and hindered by many things. It is dull and lethargic when the body

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is unwell, tired, or underfed, or even overfed. There are conditions under which the brain seems unable to respond to the commands of the will, although flagellated never so severely. There are times when ideas flow faster than we can transfer them to paper, and there are others when the wheels drag and the whole mental machine is stupid. Dr. Storrs tells a story, in quite another connexion, of a sailor who one day while crossing the Atlantic received a heavy blow upon his head. A lady, amongst others, witnessed this, and was much troubled. Some days passed before she saw the same man again. He was then at the wheel, steering the vessel. Thinking of the accident, she went up to him and said, 'How's your head to-day?' 'West-nor'-west, and running free,' was the reply. Sometimes the preacher is able to make a similar report.

Invention may be stimulated in different ways, some of which are legitimate, others illegitimate. It need scarcely be said that resort to all kinds of drugs, such as alcohol and opium, is wrong. That these stimulate the imagination and quicken the fancy is a fact; De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium-eater* prove and illustrate it in a vivid manner. Such narcotics stir the depths of the subliminal consciousness, but they very often stir more than water, and the agitation always results in physical and moral harm. Less harmful, yet nevertheless undesirable, are excessive mental stimulants such as exciting books, exciting company,

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and even a certain class of religious services. Under such excitations ideas flow more freely, but a certain penalty has to be paid. A minister I knew well, popular in and out of his own church, made a practice of making his new sermons on a Sunday evening after preaching, because ideas flowed more freely, and the lamp of imagination burned brighter, but the strain was great. He died an old man at the age of forty. Of course, helpful conditions, physical and mental, should be seized, but all wasteful strain and mental dissipation must be avoided.

Invention, however, can be stimulated in quite legitimate ways.

1. One of these is by noting the etymological significance of the words of a text. This is one of Ruskin's excellent pieces of advice to students which preachers might well observe. Take the word 'sincere,' for example, which is made up of two Latin words—*sine* 'without,' *cera* 'wax,' 'without wax.' It was an ancient custom to fill up defects in certain vessels with wax, as carpenters fill up flaws in a piece of wood with putty, but when the testing-time came the wax melted and the flaws were revealed. It was *with* wax. What a mine of suggestions is here uncovered! Or take the word 'wealth.' The surface meaning of the word is 'riches,' a wealthy man is a rich man. But break up the word and you get 'weal-th'—'weal' meaning 'well-being.' Hence wealth, in its deeper, truer meaning, is well-being.

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2. Invention is also assisted by underlining each word in a text, not for the purpose of using them as divisions, but for creating thought. Take, for example, 'God so loved the world,' &c. By underlining *God . . . 'so' . . . loved the world* there leaps into the mind a whole series of ideas calculated to affect an audience greatly.

3. The context, too, will be found most suggestive, as will corresponding passages in other parts of the Bible, proving the truth of the saying, 'The Bible is its own best commentary.' Hence one of the most valuable books in a preacher's library is a good concordance. Then, in addition to all this, the habit of brooding must be formed; overshadowing and nestling an idea while another is being hatched, keeping one warm while another comes to birth.

It will be found in practice that much will be gathered which cannot be used, much that is irrelevant, and also much for which there is no present use; for no idea comes into the world singly, but arrives bringing in a dozen others with it, and bearing some resemblance to it. Shelter, however, those only which are real brother and sister to it. One has said, 'A sermon should be a monogram and not an encyclopaedia—an agency for pushing one article, and not a general store where one can purchase anything from a button to a coffin.' But much that is irrelevant to one subject may fit another, and that which will not suit to-day may be accepted to-morrow. Nothing need be wasted or

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'cast as rubbish to the void.' The gardener prunes the trees in autumn, and the slips seem doomed to perish; but this is not inevitable, for if the prunings be planted they will become trees, in their turn bearing foliage and fruit. So the discarded ideas need not be destroyed, but may grow into sermons in the days to come. Still they must not be used at once. Young preachers are usually afraid to use the knife, afraid to fling anything away, forgetting that some loss is always necessary to perfection. The picture is perfected quite as much by the artist's deletions as by his additions. An artist who insists on leaving all the paint he may have used on the canvas will not produce a picture, but a daub. So a preacher must not try to use every idea that arises on a given subject, nor even all the good ones. Many a sermon fails not only from lack of ideas, but from a plethora of them. The 'candle may be extinguished not from lack of oil, but through over-much,' drowned in its own fat; or to use another figure, a sermon can be so full of meat as to give both preacher and hearer indigestion, especially if it is not well cooked. Better a small loaf carefully mixed, well kneaded, and thoroughly baked, than a dozen loaves half-baked. Aim to give everything good in a sermon, but not too much of it, remembering that a cake may be heavy through its very richness. Many things, also, will have to be put aside that were first included, because they are hurtful to some section of the audience. A caustic sentence, a hard thought, or an insinuating illustra-

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tion—these must come out, lest the bruised reed be broken, and the smoking wick quenched. It may be a pet child, born in a moment of inspiration ; but out it must come, lest ‘the lame be turned out of the way.’

II. *Distribution*.—It is not enough for the builder to bring his material—stone, brick, mortar, and timber—on to the site ; he must now consult the architect’s plans and dispose of his material according to instructions. There are three main divisions of the material.

I. The introduction. This is not a traditional part of a sermon merely, a sermon-builder’s fad ; but a necessity, for people dislike coming into contact with mind-facts abruptly as much as they dislike bodily bumps. The natural method is to be led gently and gradually up to facts and conclusions.

An introduction may be of many kinds.

(1) It may take the form of removing some initial difficulty attaching to the subject ; a kind of rolling away of the stone from the sepulchre out of which the living truth may come.

(2) It may be something said in order to put the speaker *en rapport* with his audience, or with the subject to be discussed.

(3) Or it may be used for giving an audience a right point of view, putting it at the right angle for understanding the truth. Truth is like a piece of Labrador spar, which seen from one angle is dark and unattractive, but seen from another is bright

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and arresting. The nature of the introduction will be determined by the kind of subject and text, and by the object aimed at. There are, however, five rules to which an introduction should conform.

(a) It should not be composed of matter belonging to the argument or main body of the sermon. I have heard young preachers put the cart before the horse in this way, squandering their best thoughts in the first few minutes, and all they could do after was to repeat themselves, or to put the same ideas in other words.

(b) It should be simple—i.e. there should be nothing elaborate about it. It should be no miniature sermon, no dazzling metaphor, but a plain guide, leading preacher and people up to the head of the way along which they are about to travel.

(c) It should be short. An excellent Christian lady, on hearing the celebrated John Howe preach, whose exordium to the sermon was an hour long, hit off the situation in a domestic figure thus : ‘ The dear good man was so long laying the table-cloth that I lost my appetite.’ People grow impatient if the preacher takes too long a time in bringing out the food.

(d) It should be quietly expressed. Some preachers explode with the first breath, and so startle their hearers that some time elapses before they can readjust themselves and intelligently listen. The thunder, if it is heard at all, should come at the end. Do not fire your gun until you

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have got good sight of the object, and are within killing range.

(e) Be sure that it really introduces—that it is not merely saying something before you begin. It should be a real presentation of the subject to the hearer and the hearer to the subject.

2. The main body. The very term 'introduction' implies that it is not the sermon, but only leads up to it. The material has been gathered, chiefly, for the main building. This, however, needs distribution and grouping under selected heads. This raises the question of sermonic divisions. The practice of dividing and subdividing has, in some periods of preaching, been carried to extremes, especially amongst the Puritans of Scotland, whose sermons frequently had a hundred heads. Because of such practices the habit of division has fallen into disrepute. But whether there be many or few, stated or not stated, divisions there must be; for just as the human body needs a skeleton to support the flesh, veins, and nerves, so a sermon needs a definite outline in order to sustain the thought. On the other hand, there should not be too much precision. The sermon should not be like a Dutch garden, laid out in a stiff and stilted style, everything trim and straight and tied up; but rather like a landscape where there is order without stiffness—fields, and trees, and brooks all distinguished, yet blending into a living whole. A congregation is not averse to divisions if they are clear and simple, nor indeed to the statement of

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them if it be done tersely. I think people rather like to be taken into the confidence of the preacher and to be told whither he is going to lead them. There is always a freer step when people can see the way than when led on blindfolded.

Divisions also serve as resting-places by the way—seats on the roadside—where muscles may be relaxed and breath taken for the next stage. These are peculiarly necessary when the thought is strenuous and the way long. As to the number of divisions there is no set limit; certainly there is no reason why they should be only three or even reach that number. Divisions should be as striking in their character as possible, which they will never be unless they are clear and short. But with these restrictions art may be used; such as, for instance, the alliterative style. Suppose the text to be 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, 'Leaving you an example that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.' The divisions may be stated thus:

1. In Christ, Christian character was crystallized.
'He did no sin.'
2. In Christ, soul-simplicity was sublimated.
'No guile found in His mouth.'
3. In Christ, man perceives his perfect pattern.
'Leaving you an example.'

But in this kind of art the preacher must be careful not to sacrifice sense to sound. Words are intended to convey ideas. If they do this clearly, then ornamentation is permissible.

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Notice four rules applicable to distribution.

1. Divisions must be distinct from each other—i.e. must contain a separate idea, and not the same idea in another form; a second division is frequently nothing but the first dressed up in a new word-garment, and 'fourthly' only 'thirdly' amplified. Such confusion weakens the effect of a discourse, because people grow restless when they hear a thing repeated without knowing the reason why.

2. Each division should have adequate attention. This does not mean that each section should be exactly equal in length, but that each should be treated according to its value. There is a real danger that this will not be done. For example, a larger amount of matter has been gathered under this head than that, which is a mere accident, and as a result the one is disproportionately large and the other ridiculously small. Washington Gladden tells of a sermon by a profound scholar and divine preached upon the text 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' The preacher spent so much time in showing how sin had abounded, and drew such a terrible picture, that he had no chance in the space left him to counteract the impression that sin abounded far more than grace—a conclusion which contradicted the teaching of the text. Take care not to allow the first- to expel the later-born; nor permit the last-born, Jacob-like, to rob the elder of its birthright. See that each idea has fair play, and that due proportion is maintained.

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In the world of ideas there should be fairness and justice as well as in the world of persons.

3. Matter should be distributed in an orderly fashion. The movement of a sermon should be like the march of an army, resolute, resonant, rhythmic, and 'not like the trampling of a mob.' The parts of an argument should fit like the wheels of a machine, moving on from premisses to conclusion. Whether the sermon be logical or an appeal to the emotions, whether it aims at conviction or persuasion, orderliness must mark the setting. A preacher may say many good things, but if they are all mixed up there is but a feeble effect. No palate can tolerate a promiscuous mixture of mustard, tea, and currants. The mustard may be a fine condiment, the tea a stimulating beverage, and the currants nice in a cake, but no one is anxious for a meal made out of such a mixture. Or, to change the figure, good things in disorder are like the bits of tinted glass in a child's play-house; there is plenty of colour, but no arrangement or harmony. But put the same bits of glass into a kaleidoscope and they at once take on order and shape, and become pleasing to the eye. The preacher's materials should be treated like the bits of glass, so manipulated as to be made to fall into a pleasing order. To achieve this there will be needed much rearrangement. In the first stages of invention thoughts occur topsy-turvy, altogether mixed up. This should not dismay but encourage the preacher. He should welcome

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them all, putting them down as they come, as a merchant welcomes every sort of coin. But there is a further act than receiving. The coins must be spread out on the counter, and gold gathered to gold, silver to silver, copper to copper, each according to their own merit and place. But even after this has been done it will be found that rearrangement is needed, and only after much shifting of material does any thing like order come out of the chaos.

4. Distribution must be cumulative. The sermon must have movement, but it must be progressive too; the movement must not be that of a horse in a gin going round and round in the same circle, but that of a spiral, every round of which leads up to a higher point. The movement must also be onward as well as upward, like a river growing broader, stronger, and more resistless as it nears the ocean.

As to where the stronger parts of a sermon should come has been much debated. Mr. Moody recommended preachers to crowd their best things into the beginning while the attention of the audience was alert and fresh; others advocate the opposite course, which certainly is the better, because the people give closer attention at first than later. Interest begins to flag after the first half, and in this latter half the most interesting things should come, and also the weightier, so that truth may be driven home. Hence the following rules. (1) The argument should increase in strength as the sermon

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progresses. If there are weaker arguments let them come first, because if this order be reversed the effect is an anti-climax. (2) The movement should be from the abstract to the concrete. If there be any abstract thinking it should come early, before the mind of either preacher or hearer becomes tired. The concrete must be used to clinch the nail. (3) All appeals to the will should come last. First let there be something for which you can appeal. Carry the outposts of the reason and conscience, and then enter the citadel of the volition, making the victory complete. This advice leads on naturally to the last part of the sermon.

III. *The conclusion.* The sermon should finish on a high note; like the thunder that at first is but a low rumble, coming nearer and nearer until it breaks at length overhead, startling, compelling, awe-inspiring. The object of a conclusion is not to give finish to a discourse, but to bring influences to a head. A conclusion may be a summary of the argument or an inference from it. Or the sermon may appropriately finish with a verse of a hymn, an invocation, a passage of Scripture, or a doxology. The conclusion, however, must not be too abrupt; at least, if it is abrupt, it must be made with skill. On the other hand, all attempt at a peroration must be avoided. It must also be brief, vivid, and energetic. Reserve some physical and psychical force for this effort. If the sermon finishes limply and languidly the people will go home listless. The preached sermon may close earlier than the written discourse.

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The preacher may find circumstances strong enough to compel him to leave some things unsaid, and to end by command of the Holy Ghost at half-time. In all these things he must be a man, not a machine, and sometimes finish earlier than he intended, always trying to leave the hearer and the truth in each other's company, the Saviour and the seeker face to face.

VI

Style

I N this lecture 'style' has no reference to delivery, but to the sermon as a piece of unexhibited art; a house built and furnished, but not yet inhabited. Of course style has much to do with delivery, but this aspect of its use will be considered in our next lecture. Here we are concerned with style as applied to the thought of a discourse and to its literary construction.

I. The first element in style is *clarity*; clarity both of thought and expression. Indeed, the former is a necessity of the latter, for no language, no matter how pure it may be, can convey clearly thought that is muddled. It was a saying with older rhetoricians that perspicacity must precede perspicuity, the meaning of which is that only he who sees clearly is able to speak clearly. All who essay to speak to others must first learn to think clearly, for how can what is muddy to ourselves be made transparent to others? It is no easy matter to make deep truths clear, but we approach nearest to doing this by endeavouring to think clearly. Not that an audience always appreciates clarity. A sermon that they can wholly understand, that has

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no unrevealed deeps, they are apt to think poor and weak ; and many get the idea that a preacher who is incomprehensible must be a great and learned man. But incomprehensibility is oftener the result of muddy rather than of deep thinking. The untutored hearer is apt to mistake sediment for sense, and glamour for gleam. The greatest man is usually the simplest, for it takes a genius to make a profound thing clear. But clear thinking is not easily reached. A man cannot become clear by an act of volition, but he can will to place himself under such conditions as shall conduce to it. He can put himself through such a course of mental discipline as will help to this end. Languages, mathematics, logic, and similar studies, tend greatly to develop the thinking powers, and this perhaps is their greater value. They are valuable in themselves, but by forming and growing a thinking man their worth is increased many fold. Clear thinking comes by no other way than by severe mental drill.

But style is dependent also upon clear expression. Thought needs to be put into those words that are most suitable to it, and that express its meaning the best. Of course a wide choice in this respect is allowable, for there may be several different words that express the meaning equally well, and which of these shall be used will be determined by individual temperament and taste. Some contend for severely simple words, and that only Anglo-Saxon words should be used, pointing to John Bright's speeches and Spurgeon's sermons as examples. Personally

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I have great admiration for this style, but it is pedantic to say that it alone is pure, for the rolling and rather involved periods of Gladstone are admissibly as good in style as the short, terse sentences of Bright. Hence good style is partly relative, and *that* style is most praiseworthy which best lays hold of the class of people we wish to reach, and best accomplishes the end in view. Very long and involved sentences should be shunned, as they are apt to confuse the hearer and ensnare the preacher. It is told of Father Taylor, the celebrated Boston preacher, that he once got so involved in a sentence, adding clause to clause, that he was quite unable to extricate himself. But he was a man of resource, and thus delivered himself from the mesh—‘Brethren, I don’t know exactly where I went in with this sentence, and I don’t know in the least where I’m coming out ; but one thing I *do* know, I’m bound for the kingdom !’ Long words, too, had better be shunned ; still, do not avoid a long word because it is long, for if it best expresses the meaning have courage to use it. The best literature reveals how fitting a long word may be, and shows sometimes that no shorter word would convey the author’s meaning. Take, for example, a verse in one of Matthew Arnold’s poems, where he is describing the luxurious life of the Roman citizen :

He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crowned his hair with flowers—
No easier, nor no quicker passed
The *impracticable* hours

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Or again :

Consumed our heart with thirst like fire,
Immedicable pain.

The reader feels that no other words would fit the thought as well, and that the sentiment would be weakened if the words were shortened. At the same time, let words be as simple as will comport with clearness, but do not spoil the sense, nor the sentence, for the sake of having in it words of one syllable only. *Simplicity*, however, must not be confused with crudeness, nor plainness with vulgarity. Therefore all slang words and phrases must be eschewed, as also all abbreviations. Contractions rob an otherwise good discourse of all dignity. Words, too, should be used in their exact and not in their approximately exact meaning. Do not speak of the world as the 'universe,' nor of a brook as a 'river.' Style is also marred by failing to use all the parts of speech in their turn, and by forgetting that there are such words as pronouns. There can be little beauty of speech when the noun is constantly repeated—the *man* did this, and the *man* did that, and the *man* went yonder. A sentence from an article in a recent publication illustrates my meaning. 'An only child has always the best chance of being *spoilt* ; when not *spoilt* by over-indulgence he may be *spoilt* by over-attention' ; a word in itself, apart from its repetition, sufficient to mar any style. Such words and sentences are to the whole like the lame deer to a herd, hindering

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the movement of the whole company. Avoid a too frequent use of the same word. I have found it a good practice, when needing an alternative word, to consult the dictionary, where several words having the same meaning occur.

II. Another important factor in style is *unity*. The kind of whole into which a sermon will fall will vary according to its aim, subject-matter, and method of treatment, but wholeness there must be. It must be true to, and in harmony with, its central or controlling principle, into which each part must run like the spokes of a wheel into the hub. The *thought* in a sermon should have unity, the argument moving from premisses to conclusion like links in a chain; the first part suggesting the second, and the third opening its arms to receive the second. It is not enough to have a succession of ideas following without any discord; there must be something closer than this. Thoughts may stand near each other without being really connected; proximity is not unity. It has been said of a brilliant writer that 'his sentences are like sabre-cuts; they have succession, but not connexion.' Some sermons are made up of thoughts lying side by side: of observations upon the text, each good in itself, and remotely related to the text, but not connected with it as their living centre, as the branches of a tree are united to the trunk. It has no more unity than the mysterious contents of a boy's pocket, into which there is crammed a strange assortment of articles—a piece of string, a nail, an ink-bottle, a piece

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of leather, and a lump of toffee. There is proximity, almost amalgamation, but no unity. Unless the sermon has unity the preacher is placed at a great disadvantage when he comes to deliver it—especially if he preaches without notes, for unless the thought be well connected, extemporary preaching is wellnigh impossible. Moreover, he will have very little pleasure in preaching ; his one anxiety is to get his task finished, and what affects the preacher painfully cannot affect an audience pleasantly. Discursiveness, also, is most wearying to a congregation, no matter how fluent a speaker may be. A temporary interest may be created, but it soon passes. Such preachers are like the juggler at a fair, who, after pretending to swallow a coin, brings out of his mouth yards of paper ribbon—blue, red, white ; an interminable output, as if his body were a paper-factory—most interesting at first, but soon becoming tiresome. A preacher may be able to string phrases together by the yard, but unless the thinking be concatenated the effect will be wearisome and ephemeral. The river must move well within its banks if its current is to be strong. If allowed to meander over an unlimited surface, it loses its momentum, and converts the fields into a fen and the meadows into a marsh. So a sermon must have boundaries ; it must be restricted to its bed ; it must have unity both of idea and expression.

III. Another indispensable quality of style is *interest*. Of course both clarity and unity are conducive to interest, yet these qualities may be present without

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the sermon being interesting. It may be connected, yet weak in thought ; clear in style, but cold. Interest is something more than either clarity or unity. There are many things conducive to interest, but here we shall note three only.

1. Variety. Preachers should abhor monotony as nature abhors a vacuum ; not only monotony of voice, but of style also. They should beware of pursuing one class of thought and one mode of expression. Sameness of expression is a mark of uneducated people and of uncultured preachers, whereas culture enlarges the keyboard and enables the preacher to strike many notes. It is said that Paganini could get exquisite music out of a violin with one string, but this does not mean that he could not have extracted more out of an instrument with four. Do not use one string when many are at your disposal. Do not tire one member of the body while others are idle. It is a fact that there are bodily members and functions less useful than they might be because they are little used. The left hand is less deft than the right because it is less in requisition. Some few people can do things as well with their left hand as with their right, and they are most interesting and valuable members of society. The preacher should be mentally ambi-dextrous—a man who can use many members rather than one.

The expression of ideas can be thrown into many forms. In addition to the plain and direct statement of facts and arguments, a discourse may have in it dialogue, interrogation, apostrophe, &c. For example,

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a sermon on the home in Bethany may legitimately include a dialogue between Martha and Mary. Interrogation also arouses attention. Not that a sermon can be made up of interrogation, but it is a most interesting diversion from the beaten track. Apostrophe also can be very effective. It is rather daring and perhaps risky, but when done in a suitable tone and attitude it is most effective. Then irony or satire may be occasionally used, as Elijah did on Mount Carmel when he addressed the defeated priests of Baal thus: 'Cry louder. Perhaps your God is asleep or gone on a journey.' But while irony is permissible, sarcasm is scarcely ever right, and never when used against persons. It can be used without compunction and with effect against error, vice, and hypocrisy. With humour, which is always kindly, it is quite different. Humour, however, should not be used in the pulpit for its own sake, or to advertise the preacher, or simply to please the people, but as a means to an end. That it is allowable is clear from the fact that it is fundamental to human nature, and therefore a part of the divine disposition, for man has been made in the divine likeness. Some of the greatest preachers in the Church have possessed and have dared to use this gift. Henry W. Beecher did. Dr. W. L. Watkinson does, and one of the great pleasures of listening to him comes through his humour, which may be seen creeping along under his skin and twinkling in his eyes before it finds expression in words. Humour has been called a 'saving grace,' and rightly too, for it

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enables a man to see life in its true proportions, to enter into its joys. The preacher who possesses it has a gift that will arouse interest. It must, however, be used sparingly, and must never be confused with wit, which is as lightning compared with sunlight. Neither must it be confused with frivolity. The smile produced by humour and that provoked by a witticism are as widely different as the tear of love and the tear of mirth. Also avoid the pun—as, e.g., ‘Jonah had to be waled before he would follow the path of duty.’

2. Interest also demands colour in style as well as variety. A sermon need not be the dull, drab thing that many suppose it to be. The thought in it should be as beautiful as possible, and the setting too. Why should art be despised in a sermon any more than in architecture and worship? But while there may be beauty, there should be an absence of ornateness. The colouring must not be gaudy. The golden threads in the fabric should not be too many, or it will become stiff and useless as a garment. The robes of Continental priests, worn in their processions on festive occasions, are simply stiff with silver and gold and consequently are heavy and burdensome. So a sermon too richly brocaded is good for show, but not for service. But a few golden strands, a little colour in the fabric, will please the eye and arrest attention.

3. Vividness also tends to arouse and retain interest. This is something different from colour. It is that which compels an audience to see the

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very thing the preacher sees. If this is to be done the preacher must himself see clearly: he must possess a strong and accurate imagination. Of course a person may be able to see, but quite unable to make others see, i.e. he has not a style equal to putting it before the eyes of others. This power is not possessed by the average preacher, but where it is possessed it is a valuable prize. The late J. B. Gough was highly gifted in this direction. It is said that he was once lecturing against Drink, and was illustrating the ruin it was working by picturing a man in a boat among the rapids above the Falls of Niagara. So vividly was this done that as the boat and man neared the fateful verge some one in the audience rose, and looking towards the well in front of the platform was heard to say *sotto voce*, 'My God, he is over!' These are ideals to which we can only approximate, and some of us not very nearly.

IV. Another factor in style is *simplicity*. This statement does not traverse what has just been said, for a speaker can be interesting and yet be simple. Everything showy must be shunned. A reciter, and even a writer, may indulge in window-dressing, but a preacher never. He must avoid what is known as the 'great' sermon, one that stands out from his average ministry, got up for the purpose of taking from place to place, and intended to display the superior sermonizing powers of the preacher. Such sermons are never truly great. 'There will be great sermons in every man's

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ministry,' but they will be those that come of themselves, that arise out of some special experience, or hour of illumination. The truly great sermon is that which sends people home to their knees and creates big resolves to lead a nobler life. The great sermons are not those we have intended to be great, on which we have spent much ingenuity, bringing into them all the flowers of rhetoric and glittering illustrations. Such may be 'fine' sermons, but not great. No man can produce a really effective sermon who is haunted by the idea, 'This sermon must be a great one.' Such a consciousness will eventually sap his real power to preach. No man's ministry will entirely lack great sermons—great because of their very simplicity. Besides, the average hearer can only benefit by the simple message. No mistake is more frequently made than that of over-estimating the capacity of a congregation. In most congregations there will be a select few who can appreciate profundity, but it is the many that must be our first care. And if a preacher must avoid profundity, much more should he avoid mock profundity. The airs of wisdom, swelling words, pretentious sentences, must give place to a style of thought and expression befitting his message and the people whom he serves—never forgetting that the message itself, at heart, is simple and the people but children in holy things.

V. Yet another important element in style is *directness*. I am not thinking of the work in relation to aim, but method. It is the opposite of

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the circumlocutory, roundabout method. 'Permit me to say, friends, if I may, and I think I ought to say it, and please do not misunderstand me if I do, that right is might.' That sort of preaching will never kill a fly. It is firing with blank cartridge; there is a big smoke and noise, but no execution. A messenger who came and told you that your house was on fire in such a style would never be believed. The preacher has to 'pull men out of the fire,' and so must use directness of speech. On my second circuit I was one day in a house to tea after conducting a service, and I overheard the good man of the house and another speaking together. 'Our young friend did well to-day,' said one. 'Oh aye,' was the reply, 'it was a nice harmless little sermon.' A sermon must be more than harmless; it needs to be like an arrow going straight to its goal. Nor need directness be hardness. It may be straight, and yet have in it the 'wooing note.' Benedick, speaking of Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*, says, 'She speaks poniards, and every word stabs.' This must be true of the preacher; at the same time the weapon must bear no poison, but rather healing for the very wounds it makes.

The question might be reasonably asked, Is style natural or acquired? Largely speaking, it is a natural gift. But much may be done to train latent possibilities. Style may be cultivated in several ways.

1. By steeping ourselves in the works of the masters of style—Hazlitt, Emerson, Thackeray, De

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Quincey, Charles Lamb, George Eliot, Ruskin, &c. Of course a sermon is more than literature, and should differ in style from the essay, novel, and newspaper ; but it *is* literature first, though, as Dr. Stalker has pointed out, literature created for the ear rather than for the eye.

2. Style is also cultivated by good conversation, i.e. by joining in talk with, and not merely listening to, a good conversationalist. Conversation trains the mind to formulate thought with facility, and to put ideas convincingly.

3. But style is best cultivated by writing. In this exercise sentences can be remodelled, phrases altered, and words added or deleted, until something like perfection is attained. Writing also affects style by increasing the vocabulary. A young preacher has to create a vocabulary, and this should have additions made to it day by day. Effectiveness is increased by the use of a wide variety of words, while it is lessened by a small and restricted vocabulary. A good way to increase our stock of words is frequently to read the dictionary, and perhaps a still better way is to make a dictionary of our own by entering into a notebook words (with their meanings) met with in our general reading. In my earlier years I found this method exceedingly helpful. This may seem trivial advice, but whatever will broaden, enrich, and strengthen the style is worthy of attention ; for as it has been said, and said rightly, ' The style is the man.'

VII

The Delivery of a Sermon

I. *POSSIBLE Methods.* Regarded broadly, these are restricted to three.

1. *Reciting.*—A sermon may be committed to memory and repeated word for word like any other recitation. Public address has frequently taken this form. It was largely the method adopted by the Greek and Roman orators, and has been practised by some great preachers in the Christian Church: a noticeable example in our own country was George Whitefield. Little, however, can be said for this practice. Certainly it allows a more highly polished diction in the structure of the sermon, and makes for a greater elocutionary effect in its delivery, but what it gains in these respects it loses in others. It entails a vast amount of labour, and also imposes an undue strain upon the memory and overtaxes the nervous energies. Usually *memoriter* preachers break down early. Another drawback to this method is that it exposes the preacher to a greater possibility of failure. A little slip, a lapse of memory, and down comes the fabric like a house of cards. Such a collapse is painful both to preacher

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and hearer, and the dread of it is a perpetual handicap to each. This method, also, precludes all spontaneity on the part of the preacher, and gives to the sermon a suspicion of artificiality ; producing on an audience more the effect of a recitation than that of a sermon. A method so exhausting and risky for preacher and hearer is one that should be avoided. It is a practice that a *young man may* follow, but it is wellnigh impossible after middle life ; consequently it is important to shun it at once, for few men can change their method after they have passed their fortieth birthday.

2. Another and more common method is that of *reading*. It has far more to be said in its favour than reciting, and has several distinct advantages. It enables a preacher to maintain a higher general level both of thought and expression than either of the other methods. A read sermon, also, has about it a natural dignity, permits the preacher to follow a more closely reasoned argument, and to put his thoughts in a more orderly and connected way. It also holds him back from that discursiveness and fatal glibness which are so wearying to an audience. This method is especially helpful to preachers of a certain temperament. For the cautious, fastidious, sensitive man who is painfully afraid of saying the wrong thing, or of saying the right thing in a wrong way, reading is the only method by which he can do his best. It is also best for the preacher with a hesitant speech and poor vocabulary, who has plenty of good thoughts, but is unable to express

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them unless he has the opportunity to pick out and place his words beforehand. On the other hand, it is a method that puts a mercurial man in fetters. But if a man reads he should take pains to become a good reader, and make the exercise as little like ordinary reading as possible. His eyes should not be, as it were, glued to the MS., nor his head unlifted from the desk. His MS. should be well written, so that there may be no stumbling or false pauses, and the leaves should be turned over quietly and without obtrusion.

But this method has many drawbacks. It checks that abandon which is so dear to an audience: it tends to destroy that freshness and spontaneity which belong to extemporaneous speech, and provides little room for gesture and dramatic effects generally: for that play of feature—the flash of the eye, the lighting of the countenance—which is so indispensable to the highest eloquence.

3. The third method of delivery is *speaking*, which is generally known as the extemporaneous. But this word here refers to the *delivery* of a sermon and not to its matter; its material must not be extemporized save very rarely; the expression only must be spontaneous. Without hesitation it can be said that this is the best method of the three, although even this is not without its dangers, one of which is slovenliness and neglect of ample preparation. It also lays the speaker open to more frequent failure, for while he will sometimes excel himself he will frequently fall below himself; and also

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exposes him to the faults of verbosity and repetition. But it has more advantages than disadvantages. It reduces the danger of dullness, and brings a greater number of faculties into play than either of the other methods; hence there is a vivacity in an extemporary sermon not present in one read or recited. There is just that difference between them which is noticeable between a gramophone and the human voice. In the instrument all the notes are accurately reproduced, the tone and timbre of the voice are there, but there is something lacking that can only be described as 'life.' People are pleased and entertained by the gramophone, but seldom moved. Or, to change the figure, the difference is that which exists between the gloved hand and the grip of warm, pulsing, clinging fingers. It also enables the preacher to use up the helps provided by the occasion, appropriating the inspiration which flows when eye meets eye and soul leaps out to greet soul in sympathy and interest. It also sets an open door for the inrush of new ideas, which are most readily generated under these conditions, as the electric current is created by the quickly revolving dynamo; ideas latent in the study wake up under the warmth and excitement of the pulpit. These the reader and reciter miss. Moreover, this is the only method that has any chance with a certain class of audience. 'The masses,' as they are called, will tolerate no other. They like to listen to a man who is independent of artificial helps. A rough backwoodsman on hearing a bishop

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preach without a manuscript, which was unusual, said : ' I like him. He is the first one I ever saw of those petticoat fellows who can shoot without a rest ' (Phillips Brooks). The man in the street is unarrested by any other method. Imagine a man reading a sermon in a slum mission-hall, or to a crowd at a street corner ! Fancy a wayside socialist pursuing his propaganda by means of a manuscript or recitation !

But if the extemporary method is to be followed successfully, the plan of the discourse must be simple, natural, connected, and well fixed in the mind ; and the preacher, at the time of delivery, must shake himself free from too much thought of his preparation, of the precise arrangement of sentences and words, or he is a lost man. Like the rider of a bicycle, whose only salvation lies in continuing to move, to pause, to look back, to hesitate, is to fail.

Some people make a compromise by using notes. If, however, notes are used they should be as few as possible, clearly written, and on suitable paper. A distinguished and eloquent layman preaching in one of my churches during his year of office took into the pulpit notes filling about forty cards. About the middle of his sermon the whole lot slipped from the desk down to his feet and spoiled the service for preacher and hearers. He was known ever after as the man who took a pack of cards with him into the pulpit. In theory the extemporary method is the ideal, but in practice each man must be a law unto himself, and should adopt the mode

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by which he can best do his work. Some will use their gifts best through a manuscript, others through notes, and still others by the extemporaneous method. Therefore 'let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.'

II. *Some excellencies and faults of delivery.*—A good or bad delivery has much to do with the effect of a sermon. A good sermon is often marred by the way it is given, and a poor sermon becomes passable when well expressed. It is said that Whitefield would thrill an audience and move it to tears by the way he could say 'Mesopotamia.' Some preachers have naturally a good delivery, while others have no gift in this direction; but that of the good may be further improved, and no delivery is so bad but it may be made better. Three of America's greatest preachers promised poorly at first in this direction. Dr. Talmage was told when a student that his whole manner of delivery must change, or he would be a failure. Bishop Simpson's was so poor that only after repeated attempts did he gain an entrance into the ministry. Phillips Brooks when at Harvard was told by the President of the University that owing to a defect in speech preaching was an impossible vocation. But through application and training each became great in his own church and gained a world-wide reputation.

1. A fundamental excellency in delivery is a *good voice*. Voice culture belongs to another branch than homiletics, nevertheless a word may not be out of place. The voice needs volume, range, compass.

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A preacher may not need, generally speaking, many notes outside the octave, but others should be there in reserve if required. Flexibility, also, should be acquired, so that there may be due modulation and the tones musical and pleasant. The enunciation should be clear and distinct. No preacher can afford to neglect his teeth ; for teeth are important as well as larynx. Distinctness differs from loudness. A voice may be loud and yet indistinct, or only a whisper and yet be heard in a big building. Some preachers have never learned the art of articulation. They speak with their mouth practically closed, or as if two or three marbles were stored away in it, or something softer. Two working men were listening to a speaker of this sort, and one said to the other, ' He speaks as if he had swallowed a dumpling.' ' No, Jack,' the other whispered, ' he ain't swallowed un ; he's got un in 'is mouth a-wobblin.' Attention must also be given to the pitch of the voice, which should be regulated by the size of the building. To pitch it too high in a small building is to waste strength and is most unpleasant. It is almost a worse fault to pitch it too low. Distinctness cannot be attained unless each letter in a word, as well as the word itself, has due attention. The consonants must not be dropped or slurred. Dropping is a common practice, hence we hear of 'shillin's,' 'clothin',' 'mornin' ;' nor should they be unduly added, as, e.g., the double 'r' of the North (norrth). The aspirate gives some speakers trouble. The cause is sometimes physical, a thin man dropping it because

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there is no spring in his diaphragm, and a stout man adding it because he has too much. The vowels too must have that open sound which is their due, and the diphthong its double vowel weight. Preachers should also resolutely drill themselves out of any county dialect, and not let their speech bewray them.

2. Delivery should be *easy*; there should be nothing forced or awkward about it. The preacher is the cynosure of all eyes, and a stilted, strained, or uncouth manner is quickly seen and condemned. The gesture should be easy and appropriate—not lifting the hands to heaven while the lips repeat ‘If I descend into the deep,’ nor delivering a tender passage with clenched fists, nor a stern denunciation with a seraphic smile on the face. If ease is to be a characteristic the preacher must seek to gain and retain perfect command of himself; he must be able to hold himself in leash, and not allow his words to come foaming and rushing ‘like the waters came down at Lodore.’ But ease of manner does not mean somnolence or dullness, but rather the control of latent and possibly active forces. Ease creates the impression that the preacher is a strong man, and puts the audience at its ease, while a fidgety man makes it restless. There is the danger, however, in trying to avoid awkwardness, of becoming formal, and so of contracting an equally objectionable vice. Repose without dullness, ease without formality, is the goal to be striven for.

3. The delivery should be *natural*; i.e. should

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harmonize with the preacher's temperament, training, and way of looking at things. Hence it follows that what may be called unnatural in one is natural in another. One man can be dramatic without creating any sense of incongruity, while if another attempts it he becomes a buffoon. The style, however, most natural to the majority is the conversational. Indeed, preaching is conversation ; it is a talk with the people, only their response is through the face and the eyes rather than through the lips : ' Come, let us reason together.' Of course it is conversation lifted to a higher level than the ordinary ; it is ' inspired conversation.' This method will be occasionally departed from, and the preacher will declaim, denounce, and soar on triumphant wings.

Let the voice be natural, as it is in conversation, where there is suitable modulation and intonation, no false or undue emphasis. A too emphatic preacher may be just as ineffective as a lymphatic one, for where everything is emphasized nothing is really emphasized. Then the tone that is frequently adopted is professional. It would not be tolerated in ordinary talk. It has been styled a ' holy Sunday tone,' ' a chapel-go-to-meeting voice.' The voice may be unnatural and affected in other ways : the little lisp of the conventional curate ; the conceited drawl of the dilettante—' He that hath yaws to yaw, let him yaw' ; and the pompous, grand, sonorous roll, ' Gawd mooves in aa mysteriaas waay.' And at its opposite pole the dapper, mincing, finessing manner—

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the puckered mouth, words bitten through in the middle, the Bible and hymn-book touched as if they were two pieces of toast, and the whole attitude apologetic.

4. Delivery should be *grave*; i.e. as opposed to a light and trifling manner. Gravity, however, is not dullness; for there can be brightness without lightness, and freshness without frivolity. The jaunty airs, the glib speech, the joke, are unbecoming in an ambassador of God. This is to drag sacred things into the mire. The idea is sometimes entertained that this sort of thing is attractive and that the people appreciate it. But it is not so. They may smile for the moment; but hear what is said afterwards! If the people like one thing more than another in a preacher it is seriousness. They will allow him to joke in their homes, but not in the pulpit. If not decidedly religious themselves, they dislike sacred things treated lightly. On the other hand, do not simulate gravity. There is a mock gravity, something put on for the occasion, which is soon discovered, as all shams are. A man may put on a solemn face and speak in sepulchral voice, and yet not take life gravely and seriously.

5. The delivery should be *energetic*. A congregation welcomes an earnest style as well as an earnest man. Earnestness, however, is not mere vehemence; it is rather a breath moving through all that is said, a spirit revealed as much in a whisper as in a shout, and in a quiet demeanour as in a boisterous manner. The preacher whose style shows that he means

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business, that his sermon is, for the time being, the most important thing in the world—this is the man who will attract. When it is absent the people grow listless, but when it is there they are alert if not persuaded. An actor was once asked by a preacher the question, ‘How is it that you get and hold the crowd and we preachers cannot?’ The actor replied, ‘I act fiction as if it were true, and you preach truth as if it were fiction.’ But for pulpit earnestness to tell, the man himself must be sincere and earnest.

6. *Modesty* will always mark a good delivery. Modesty in one who represents another, and delivers a commissioned message, is becoming. And yet the very fact that the preacher is thus commissioned, and called to such an honourable and lofty post, tends to foster an exalted spirit. A minister is lifted to a place of eminence amongst his fellows, he is looked up to, deferred to, sought after, has entrée into the best society of his church—all of which appeal to his natural egotism. Some yield to the temptation, and swell with pride: ‘My name is in the papers; I am of importance in the councils of my church; my preaching is complimented.’ No wonder that the belief is widespread that ‘vanity is a prevalent weakness amongst ministers.’ If this be part of his spirit it will creep into his sermon and into his manner in the pulpit, and when it does it damages his character and mars his message. Perhaps young preachers, especially those who are a little clever, are in the greatest danger of this snare.

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They are apt to think that they know all, and so are opinionated in conversation and inflated in the pulpit. 'A man's first wonder when he begins to preach is that people do not come to hear him; after awhile he begins to wonder that they do' (Phillips Brooks). I look back with some shame upon a little incident that occurred more than once on my first circuit. One of the towns in it published a paper which reported an occasional sermon by local ministers. Seeing a reporter in the congregation (it was only a youth practising his shorthand), I thought he might be after me, and when the paper came out—I tell it as a secret—I took it aside quietly, and looked and looked, but in vain, for any reference to my sermon. Foolish, egoistic lad, so the man thinks. A man who feels like that has much to learn: he is not yet a true preacher, for no man can say a thing well until he forgets that he is saying it. The preacher really begins to preach when he has ceased to remember that he is one. The immodest, conceited preacher is out of place, and unless he has extraordinary counterbalancing gifts will not be a preacher long. In regard to faults none are entirely free; but if they are on the surface, while they mar, they do not destroy a man's influence. But even surface faults should be attacked and got rid of. The first step towards this end is to know them, and happy is the man who has a friend faithful and candid enough to tell him of them.

Nor let us forget that a good style is not very far from a bad style, and a small man copying a great man is

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more likely to imitate his defects than his excellencies, because his excellencies are below, while his defects are on the top. A notable preacher does something that is unusual, and we are apt to think that therein lies the secret of his power—which is akin to a child learning to stammer because it is struck with this peculiarity in some big school-fellow. The preacher thinks if he only opens the hymn-book or closes the Bible or pulls the very same wry faces as this or that preacher does, he will become great too. Phillips Brooks once went with an intelligent friend to hear a great man lecture. Afterwards the friend said, ‘Did you see where his power lay?’ ‘No; did you?’ was the reply. ‘Yes, I watched him, and it is in the double motion of his hand. When he wanted to calm and subdue he turned the palm of his hand down, and when he wanted to inspire he turned the palm of his hand up. That was it.’ If a man of intelligence and experience could make such a mistake, there is much excuse for the novice. No, no; it lies deeper than this. The preacher is more than a magician, and to copy such externalities is probably only to follow a fault or to repeat a mannerism. Look out for the excellencies, of course, but be sure that they are such. Cultivate clear enunciation, ease, naturalness of manner, gravity, earnestness, and modesty, for by such means faults are best escaped, and the preacher approaches to the ‘workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.’

VIII

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WE have hitherto been considering the sermon in its separate parts ; but in this lecture we look at it as a whole, and from the standpoint of its effectiveness. A sermon may be fairly perfect as a piece of composition, and yet, as a whole, lack efficiency ; it may be geometric in its structure, and yet be without dynamic. I shall assume that there has been persistent and painstaking preparation, for without this what follows is of little value. In music the first thing is the instrument—this, with its strings and hammers, its keyboard and pedals, must be ready, well-made, and fitly combined, before the player can do anything. He may have every qualification ; but his degrees, and skill, and inspirations, are useless without the instrument. So the preacher may have lofty aims, pure motives, and noble ideals ; but below and behind these there must be thorough preparation. ‘It is of eloquence as of a flame—it requires matter to feed it’ (Pitt). Assuming, then, that the foundations have been well and truly laid, and the superstructure reared, let us pass on to note some elements which make for that

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effectiveness which the sermon should possess as a whole.

1. *Brevity*.—It may have this without lacking any of its essential parts, just as a little man may be anatomically as perfect as a giant. A great preacher may sustain the interest of an audience for an hour, and under extraordinary circumstances even an ordinary one may do this; but, speaking generally, half that time is long enough. An old preacher used to say to a young man, 'My dear friend, I don't care what else you preach about, I wish you would always preach *about* forty minutes.' Men like Dr. Forsyth may complain that 'the demand for short sermons on the part of Christian people is one of the most fatal influences at work to destroy preaching in the true sense of the word,' but the fact is that the ordinary congregation simply will not listen to long discourses. It may remain in the building for a long time, detained by the etiquette of worship, but this does not ensure its listening, any more than driving cows to the water will make them drink. Many an otherwise good sermon has been spoiled by its length, while very few have been made worse through being too short. There is one element of success within the reach of every preacher—brevity. If some of you find it difficult to say all you have prepared in thirty or forty minutes, then be sure there is something wrong with the preparation. My advice is, take it back to the mill, reduce its bulk by grinding it down, for the way to save time in the pulpit is to lengthen it

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in the study. You may think, by thus abbreviating, the people will feel a sense of loss ; but, believe me, this is quite a mistake.

2. *Suitability*—i.e. the sermon should fit the people and the occasion. A poorer suitable production will be more effectual than a far better one out of place. No matter how good a thing may be, any sense of unfitness felt by preacher and congregation will considerably reduce its effect. A Christmas sermon may be effective in December, but futile in May ; and a harvest-thanksgiving sermon in January would do more harm than good. These may be extravagant examples ; but similar results will follow all incongruity in a greater or less degree. Perhaps the preacher who has no pressing need to prepare new material is most likely to fall into this snare, while the man who has to get something new for each occasion is usually the freshest. Having to prepare often, he prepares suitably. The material may not be quite so rich, but, being suitable, its effect will be greater. When about to prepare for a given occasion let one of the questions asked be, ' Have I anything suitable ? ' If not, then proceed at once to make something.

3. *Freshness*.—The sermon should be fresh both to the people and ourselves. It must not have lost interest for us. If a sermon has become dead, the sooner it is buried the better. A sermon, if it is to tell, must have bloom on its cheek, light in its eyes, a throb in its veins. It should be alive in all its parts. It need not be sensational in order

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to be this. There is enough vitality in the truths we have to preach to make the message fresh without having resort to meretricious methods. The newness of sensationalism may attract for a while, but speedily vanishes. This is a freshness similar to that produced by physical stimulants. Some sermons and preachers are 'fresh' by means of false mental stimulants, and the end is collapse. But there is a sane, legitimate freshness—the freshness of life and truth. The world of matter and of man, together with the Bible, are full of old yet ever-new truths. The real scribe will bring 'out of the treasury things new and old.' In a country village in one of my circuits there lived a quaint old man deeply interested in the preachers and their sermons. One day he said to a friend of mine, 'It says in the Bible that the preacher must bring out "things new an' ould," but we'en had it all "ould" here lately.' Don't keep sermons long enough for them to get musty. If you have only little to give, let that little be fresh.

4. To be powerful the sermon must have *courage*. It should have a touch of audacity due to the holy daring of the man who utters it. This does not mean that there shall be no reserves, or that the preacher shall be wild and heedless in his utterances. Courage is sometimes confused with blind declamation. The question of what shall be said and how to say it must be well considered beforehand, and all the possible consequences reckoned with. But, when a man has carefully and prayerfully come

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to the conclusion that certain things ought to be said, let him say them without conferring with flesh and blood. This is not easy to do. No man is more tempted to act the coward, or is in more danger of yielding, than the preacher. He likes to stand well with the people. The desire to be popular is a proverbial weakness of preachers, and so there is a constant temptation to act obsequiously, to whittle down the truth, and to compromise where there should be firmness and courage. Of course it must be a tempered daring; like Christ's, it must be toned with charity. Jesus dared to tell Jerusalem that it had stoned the prophets, yet He could shed tears over its foolishness and sins. But, while the preacher is outspoken, he must not pillory his audience. To assail a sinner unmercifully is not truly courageous, and is more likely to drive away than to attract. 'I will *draw* all men unto Me.' 'He that *winneeth* souls is wise.' The sermon may be courageous without hurting. In war, a flank or rear movement may be just as courageous as a frontal attack, and more effective. A man living in sin is met by a Boanerges, who vehemently says, 'Unless you alter your ways you will go to hell.' Later this same man meets a Barnabas, who pleads, 'My friend, if you will only forsake your sin you will go to heaven.' This is but the other side of the first truth, and the last man is no less faithful than the first.

5. *Sympathy*.—This quality is, of course, primarily in the man, for, usually, if the preacher be big-hearted

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and sympathetic, his good feeling will overflow into his utterances. Nor should this quality be occasionally present, in times of bereavement and revival, but more or less in every sermon. And it is this sympathetic note in both preacher and sermon that brings pulpit and pew together, and so creates one primary condition of success. The sermon with the sympathetic note will touch human interests at many points ; it will come into close contact with the common needs of men and women. Truth should be spoken, not in an abstract, aloof way, but so as to fit and help this man and that woman in the congregation. A minister should not only know, but be 'steeped in the life of his people.' He should know their calling, and make it his business to understand something of their business, and must feel their needs. If his sphere be the mining village, he must know the life of the collier underground, on the bank, and in the house. If it be a fishing hamlet, he must be familiar with the life of the fishermen as they row their boats, cast their nets, and as they return home sad or glad. He should share also the anxiety of those at home who watch, and weep, and wait for the toilers, 'while the harbour bar is moaning.' If the sphere be in an industrial centre, then the life of the people in the forge, the mill, the warehouse, the shop, and the office must be understood. And if the circuit be in the country, then the minister must know something of the orchard, the field, and the barn.

As he realizes the life of his people his sympathies

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are stirred and pass into his sermon, which becomes saturated with feeling, as a seaweed is filled with water. His message, while faithful, must be sympathetic. The Christian preacher is first and foremost a helper ; not an accuser, nor a judge, but primarily a bearer of the evangel of love, redemption, and good cheer. In his message there is no place for scorn, or sneers, or cynicism, but room only for tenderness and sympathy. The Spirit of Power promised to Christ's Church is also the Paraclete—Comforter. The 'wooing note' must be cultivated by the Christian minister. He must never forget that before him are hurt souls needing healing, bewildered travellers needing guidance, and heavily laden shoulders aching for relief.

6. *Certitude* is another indispensable note in the sermon as a whole. It should be a definite declaration made with conviction. He who undoubtedly delivers his message is listened to and followed. The people come, usually, to listen to the gospel message, and not to something about it ; to hear truth proclaimed rather than discussed. The pulpit is not the place for negations, nor for airing doubts, nor even for the discussion of doctrinal problems. It is right and proper to discuss such problems ; it is well to know what is being said against Christian doctrine as well as for it, to discover the weak places in our armour as well as the strong ; but the place for these things is not the pulpit. Indeed, discussion is as necessary as putting the wheat through the mill and the grist

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through the sieve. Criticism is right in the classroom, and should precede, underlie, and surround the sermon, but should not be part of it. Results and not processes are needed here. The visitors to an art gallery go to see the finished picture, and not the easel, the palette, or the paint; it is the scenery of the stage, and not the ropes that move it, that attracts. It is the results of debate that are desired and demanded. To discuss too much in the pulpit is to make the audience uneasy—to create the feeling that the preacher is not quite sure of his ground, and that he is not dealing in things ‘assuredly believed.’ This is an analytical age, and its spirit is with difficulty kept out of the pulpit; and there are preachers ‘who seem to do nothing else but discuss Christianity as a problem instead of announcing it as a message’ (Phillips Brooks). The botanist may discuss the rose in his study, dissecting its parts, counting its petals, analysing its pollen; but to do this in the sick-room is almost sacrilege. And the little girl who carries one to the bedside, laying it beside the pale cheek on the pillow, has a truer understanding of the flower, at least for the present, than the man of science. She, and not he, is the ministering angel, and is doing what the sick one most needs.

‘But suppose,’ so it is asked, ‘people are in error, ought they not to be undeceived and set right?’ Certainly; but it is best to do this by positive rather than negative methods—not so much by showing them where *they* are wrong as where *you* are right. Suppose,

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e.g., that their views of the Atonement are mechanical and crude, with the material blood as its source and efficiency. Better than attacking these ideas directly, calling them gross and sanguinary, will it be to preach the eternal love of the Father who delights to forgive the penitent. People who would only be hurt and alienated by denunciations of their theory of Atonement could do no other than acquiesce in a sermon on 'God so loved the world that He gave,' &c. The best way to get darkness out of a room is to let in the light. Weeds are better destroyed by planting the field with corn. The best way to overcome error is by preaching the truth. 'Overcome evil with good.' Also, let the truths chiefly emphasized be those that the preacher is sure of, because the people's belief seldom rises higher than his. This demand may greatly reduce his creed; but better a scanty creed heartily believed than a broad one held limply and languidly. It is the man who is certain, who knows, who believes strongly, that impresses others.

The nun in the legend of the 'Holy Grail' arrested, convinced, and constrained the reluctant knight to holier things by the resistless impact of her own faith.

And as she spake
She sent the deathless passion of her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

The preacher who confidently tells his message is the man who is listened to and followed.

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7. *Sincerity*.—The sermon, to be efficient, must be sincere, real, and what it assumes to be. Almost more than another man, because he is looked up to, the preacher should be honest, saying the things he feels and knows to be true. This, ~~as already hinted at~~ will probably limit his range of utterance; but what his ministry loses in breadth it will gain in depth. 'A prime virtue in the pulpit is mental integrity. . . . Argument which does not satisfy the preacher's own logical instinct; illustrations that do not commend themselves to his aesthetic taste; a perspective of doctrine which is not true to the eye of his deepest insight; to use borrowed materials which offend his sense of literary taste . . . these sap the preacher's personality and neutralize his magnetism' (Phelps, *My Note-Book*). There is a real danger of a preacher using material that is mere hearsay, and still more danger of continuing to preach things that have become unreal to him, because he thinks that people like to hear them, or that his congregation will suffer harm if he ceases to preach them. Many a minister holds on, e.g., to a form of preaching that assumes the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures long after he has abandoned the theory himself, simply because his people would be shocked if he did any other.

I have great sympathy with the advice of Phillips Brooks: 'Never sacrifice your reverence for truth to your desire for usefulness. Say nothing you do not believe to be true because you think it may be helpful.' He even goes further than this: 'Keep

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back nothing which you *know to be true* because you think it may be harmful.' Of course he is careful to include only what *we know* to be true, and not what is yet in the crucible ; and only what *we* know to be true and not other people. But, even with these reservations, I cannot wholly endorse his last sentence, especially in the light of the Master's words to His disciples : ' I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now '—which seem plainly to teach that, while nothing but the truth should be spoken, there are times when it should be kept back.

There is also an emotional insincerity that must be avoided ; as there may be mental falsity, so there may be mock fervour. Earnestness may be simulated as well as thought. A man may appear to be in earnest who is only excited by the magnetism of the moment ; the emotion is not the result of a deep-rooted conviction, nor is it born of God, but is simply a movement caused by those electric currents that pass between speaker and hearer. The feeling may be suitable to the occasion, but is no more genuine than were the altar-fires of Nadab and Abihu.

8. Another, and last, note of effectiveness is *unction*. It is a word that has little meaning outside religious utterance, but within the sphere of religion it is the mark of the man who is filled with the Holy Ghost, who lives in the atmosphere of prayer, and who longs for the salvation of men ; it is peculiar to the man who dwells in the realities of

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the spiritual world, who is conscious of a divine afflatus resting upon him, and who intensely realizes his commission. This incoming of energies from without, this enduement, is to the preacher what the breath is to the lute—it is that which creates the music. It is true that the quality of the music is conditioned by the instrument and by the player; there must be the well-tempered reed, and fingers trained to manipulate correctly before the best melody can come forth. So must there be the preaching faculty, the native gifts, the patient training of the man. These are necessary; but there needs to be added something from without, like the air in the reed, giving vitality, throb, and tone to the whole—the ‘unction from the Holy One.’ A sermon may be structurally good, having in it the qualities that go to make up a perfect discourse—in the study. But many a sermon that passes muster in the study is a failure in the pulpit, because it lacks some of the elements I have mentioned, and chiefly unction.

Tholuck says that a sermon must be twice-born—once in the study, and a second time in the pulpit; and it is this second birth, this unction, that endues it with life and power. It is this that converts mechanism into dynamic, and changes the mere sermonizer into a prophet. The prophet of olden time became so, not by holding a certain office, nor by being attached to a given school, nor by the form of words in which he spoke, but by reason of the holy fervour that possessed him, making his thoughts to breathe and his words to burn. This fervour is that inexplicable

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something that makes the difference between preacher and preacher, between sermon and sermon, and between the same sermon at one time as compared with another. The same elements make up the bar of iron, whether cold or hot ; but in the heated bar, while there is no new particle of matter, there is an added affection or influence that transforms it into another thing. Unction means fire, heat, life. Dr. Jowett tells how he, as a boy, used to watch his mother brew herb-beer, and noticed that, when finished, she always put it out into the open air and sunlight ; and, on inquiry, she told him that this was done in order that it might gain 'soul,' by which she meant an added vim, pungency, and piquancy. The final need of our sermons is 'soul,' and, in order that they may gain this, let them be brooded over ; let them be put under the light of the Divine Eye, under the heat-rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and where the winds from heaven blow. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost was mighty because it was preceded by the experiences of the Upper Room ; therefrom it gained its momentum and grip. We have access to the same sacred enclosure. 'The gift of God is without repentance.' The powers of Pentecost have come to stay.

IX

The Conduct of Public Worship

WHILE the sermon is the centre of the Protestant service, other parts of it are important, and the way in which these are regarded affects the whole ; for a service may be ineffectual, even when the sermon is good and well delivered, because the background and environment are poor or unsuitable. Hence every exercise must be regarded as part of the service, and not as a 'preliminary.' To use the term 'preliminaries' of the earlier parts of a service is out of place, for it implies that worship does not commence until the text is announced. But such a conception is not only a religious fault, but a psychological mistake, for both mind and heart need to be prepared for the preached Word ; it takes the mind a little time to adjust itself to the situation—the pivot on which it revolves needs oiling. In other words, the right atmosphere for the reception of truth needs creating ; a warm bed requires to be prepared for the seed if it is to germinate. Christ's Parable of the Sower clearly teaches that a good harvest is not dependent upon the quality of the seed alone, but upon the kind of

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soil into which it falls—that the best seed will only perish in an unsuitable environment. The hymn, the reading of the Word, the prayers, are needed to create the worshipful spirit and the right state of mind for the reception of the truth. Hence the preacher, anxious that his message shall be effective, cannot afford to neglect any part of a service ; he must regard it as a whole, one part preparing for another, and each section supporting and sustaining the rest. Nothing must be slurred ; nothing done without plan and thought ; nothing of which we can say, ‘This does not matter.’ Some of the things of which we are about to speak may, by comparison, appear small.

1. May I say a word upon *dress in the pulpit* ? In Nonconformity much freedom is allowed in this respect. Whether a man wears a white or black tie is left to individual taste and temperament ; if a man likes to wear a black tie he may do so, but if he prefers a white one, even a dog-collar or stock, no one has a right to call him a priest. Because a priest wears something that is suitable, that is no reason why he should have the monopoly. Of course, ministerial dress does not make the minister, just as a robe of purple does not make a king, nor the garment of camel’s hair and leathern girdle a John the Baptist ; but a minister’s dress should be in harmony with his work. As his work is serious, his dress should be sober ; it should symbolize his spirit. How a person dresses is indicative of character ; there is, as Carlyle has shown, a ‘ philo-

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sophy of clothes.' I cannot imagine a man entering the pulpit in a loud check suit, white waistcoat, and yellow tie. If I could, I should at once conclude that he had mistaken it for the stage. Not that these patterns or colours are wrong in themselves, but that they indicate a spirit out of harmony with the preacher's vocation. Dress should at least be neat and well-fitting, with nothing that renders the preacher uneasy in mind or body—nothing that will make him a scarecrow or a trussed fowl. Wear nothing that will fetter free action—no choking collar, no strangling cravat, no tight waistcoat ; but each garment ample for the free play of lungs and limbs. Neatness is also appropriate. Unlike ministers in some churches, you will not be expected to wear gowns. For a slovenly man this is a pity, for a surplice, like charity, hides a multitude of faults. I will only add another thing—never appear in soiled linen. The ransomed of the Lord are to be 'clothed in white robes.' Surely the dress of those who are leading the returning hosts should not be less spotless. Let the dress be such as will meet the tastes of the congregation, and such as will satisfy your own self-respect.

2. The *minister's demeanour in the pulpit* is also important. He should enter it promptly, and in a dignified, reverent, and thoughtful manner. An audience is attracted to, or alienated from, a preacher by his pulpit manner. If he enter in a jaunty way, bound up the stairs two steps at a time, and then sits down to stare around the building, prejudice is

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created. On the other hand, decorous behaviour creates a favourable impression. After the death of M'Cheyne, the Scotch minister who was so much beloved, there was found upon his desk an unopened note, left by one who had heard his last sermon : ' I was greatly blessed by your sermon last Sunday evening. It was not so much what you said as your manner that struck me. I saw in you a beauty of holiness I never saw before.' The pulpit should be entered in a spirit of prayer. It was the custom (I do not know if it obtains to-day) of ministers in Holland to pause at the lowest step of the pulpit, and there to offer silent prayer. Perhaps it is better to defer such an act until the pulpit is entered. A reverent ease should be the prevailing attitude, and so everything contributory to this, down to every material arrangement, including the light, the height of the desk, and the slope of the book-board, should have attention. Small as these matters may seem, they help to make or mar a service.

3. An important part of the service is the *singing*. Hymns should be chosen with care, and should be suitable, yet not too much allied with the lesson and sermon, as this tends to monotony. The better plan is to open with a more general hymn, and allow the later ones to approach nearer the subject. The last especially should be akin to the theme, and, if possible, an epitome of its truth, or a sort of hammer to drive home the preached ideas. Do not run on the same class of hymn at every service, and be careful not to exclude, as the

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tendency to-day is, really gospel hymns, such as 'Rock of Ages,' 'Jesu, Lover,' &c. Insist upon having certain tunes to certain hymns, for there are tunes that fit a hymn like a glove fits the hand: no others will do. 'When I survey,' loses half its meaning and power for me when sung to any other tune than 'Rockingham.' The choirmaster may fume, but better this than that the service be spoiled. Try, however, to keep on the amiable side of your choir, and to this end humour it a little, and drop in occasionally at the practices. Announce the hymn clearly and distinctly, and do not say, 'Hymn 29,' but 'Hymn Number 29.' It is well, when not too long, to sing the hymn through; but, if omissions are made, let there be no mistake as to which verses you wish left out.

4. It may seem trivial to mention such a thing as *church notices*, yet they are frequently flies in the ointment; they are often so numerous as to become a wedge in the service and weary the people. In large churches the best plan is to print them each week and distribute them in the pews. The next best thing is for the steward, or some other appointed person, to give them out, as it becomes tiring to the minister to do everything; only he must see that it is not a man given to elaboration. I had a gentleman appointed to do this work in one of my churches who took elocution lessons in order that he might do it with effect. One could admire his zeal if not his sense. If a preacher is compelled to read them himself,

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let him do so simply. I have heard notices read in a high-pitched voice and with all the solemnity of messages from heaven. They are best read just before or after the collection. Have both fairly early, so that fussy stewards may find repose, and that the impact of the service may not be injured.

5. The *reading of the Scriptures* should be an important part of worship, but in many of our churches little attention is paid to it. The announcement of the lesson is frequently made incorrectly: 'The third of Isaiah,' 'The fifth of Revelation,' instead of 'The third chapter of the Prophecy by Isaiah,' and 'The fifth chapter of the Revelation of St. John.' Much of the reading is done in a slovenly manner, with poor or even with wrong emphasis. In my first circuit there lived a school-master preacher with a fine voice and elocutionary power, who was much in demand for special services, but this was more on account of his excellent reading than because of his preaching. He made the people hear the voice of the Prophets, of Jesus, and of the Apostles in the chapters he read. Some churches use a lectionary, which has many advantages; but there is much to be said for the free choice of lessons. When this is done, they should be carefully selected, one, at least, having some relationship to the sermon, and tending to illuminate and strengthen it.

The danger of the free-choice method is that favourite passages will be too frequently read and

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large portions of the Bible passed over untouched. The lessons should be read over before the service ; the meaning thoroughly gripped, and the words and phrases needing special emphasis carefully noted. The lessons should be short. If the occasion requires that a long portion be read, then cut it up into two or even three sections. This is far less wearying than one long reading. I have found it a good plan to make one of the readings expressly devotional, one only having a specific bearing on the text. The practice of addressing the children instead of reading a lesson is tending to crowd out the reading of the Word. This is a distinct loss ; for even when the sermon is poor, if the Scriptures are duly and well read, the congregation gets enough truth to make it 'wise unto salvation,' and no soul needs to go empty away.

6. *Prayer* is a vitally important part of a service. In this the minister essays to lead the congregation to the Throne of Grace, into the Holy of Holies of the Divine Presence, and there to speak for himself, and on their behalf. Hence it is an exercise to which there should be given careful thought and preparation. In the Free Churches the subject has too little attention, and it may be regarded as our weak spot. The solemnity of the act has led to the practice of using a liturgy, so that the Deity might be approached in appropriate and suitable words ; and, while the practice is contrary to the genius of our Church as things stand at present, yet there is something to be said in its favour. It frees the

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minister from too much thought and anxiety about the externals of prayer, and allows him to enter heart and soul into the exercise. In extemporary prayer it is difficult to keep the mind from thinking about the formation of sentences, and from verbal distractions. Then, also, it permits the congregation to know beforehand the things for which it is about to pray, whereas in extemporary prayer these have to be gathered as the words fall from the minister's lips. On the other hand, there is a danger of written prayers becoming formal and lifeless, and of failing to express the real needs of the worshippers. Probably the ideal course is a combination of liturgical and free prayer. Personally speaking, I should like a few prayers printed, say, at the end of the Hymnal, which might be used at discretion—free prayer to preserve the spontaneity of worship ; liturgical to assist the orderliness, and to compel all the people to join. As a church¹ we are not yet ready for this ; but as the spirit of reverence grows, the forms of expressing it must grow too, one of which will be a modified liturgy combined with free prayer. This has been conceded in part, for many of our churches already either repeat or sing the Lord's Prayer ; and, by way of parenthesis, let me say, when the Lord's Prayer is *repeated* by the people it is the duty of the minister to give them a clear and strong lead.

Let us notice a few qualities necessary to free public prayer. In this it is assumed that the

¹ Primitive Methodist.

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preacher has the right spirit, for no man can effectively lead in prayer who has not the praying heart ; it is this that gives grip and power to his invocations.

(1) Prayer should be such as can be heard by the people as well as by God. Of course, prayer can be silent, and at the same time very real ; but if the exercise is to be communal, the leader must be audible, so that the worshippers may follow without strain. Hence, in united prayer, standing is a better attitude for the minister than kneeling. The head should not be too much bent, for then the words do not travel ; nor too much thrown back, as then the words are choked and strangled. Not that attitude should be thought about ; but good habits should be formed, and then forgotten. Loudness should be avoided, and the pitch such as will allow for modulation befitting rising or falling emotions.

(2) The phrasing should be simple, free from mere colloquialism on the one hand and studied ornament on the other. Undue colloquialism is reprehensible, and rhapsodizing is almost as repellent. And I should consider a prayer failed in its purpose if it could be called 'fine' or 'eloquent' ; such terms can no more be fittingly used of prayer than they can of a child's request for bread. Simplicity will prevent the too frequent repetition of the divine name. It is painful to hear that name repeated in every sentence ; such repetitions jar upon our sense of fitness, and become wearisome and monotonous. The prayer should soar, not grovel ; it should rise to the same

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dignity of speech as exists between parent and child, which is always simple and restrained. Still less should prayer be interlarded with endearing words, such as, 'sweet Jesus,' 'lovely Lord,' 'dear God.' They may be permissible very occasionally, when coming from certain persons, and when certain moods prevail, but when used as a habit they render prayer sickly, if not silly. In true home intercourse, which is the best model of prayer, such words are used very rarely.

(3) Prayer should be reverent in spirit and form. The attitude, as part of the form, should be reverential; the eyes closed, no gesticulations, no contortions—indeed, just such behaviour as would become an approach to a great person. The words should be reverent too; no mere story, nor light or flippant speech. I was much shocked by the opening sentence of a minister's prayer one Sunday morning after a hot week—'O Lord, Thou knowest we have swallowed a lot of dust this week.' Another form of irreverence is that of giving too much attention to what the worshippers will think, to what will please them, and especially when the words used are indirectly flattering, speaking of them as 'this highly respectable congregation.' It is irreverent when used to thrust a dart at some one, or some group of persons, or made the medium of condemning some sin which the minister has not courage to denounce in his sermon. Another form of irreverence is the hectoring spirit, demanding in a peremptory way the things desired. Impertinence is hateful

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anywhere, but most hateful in the house and act of prayer. The reverent spirit speaks thus : ' Let this cup pass from me ; yet, nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.'

(4) Use largely Scriptural phrases in prayer, for God is most suitably approached in words from His own Book. But be sure that they are quotations, and not cant phrases masquerading in the guise of Scripture—e.g. ' Let Thy grace go from heart to heart, as oil from vessel to vessel ' ; nor passages misquoted, as, e.g., ' Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst, *and that to bless.*' But, when suitably used, Bible phrases ennoble and uplift the act of prayer in all its forms. How unsurpassable as an invocation is this : ' Thou art the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, who dwellest in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' How elevated is this thanksgiving : ' What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits unto us ? We will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.' How could a confession be more appropriately expressed than in these words : ' For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' How suitable is this petition : ' Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean : wash me, and I shall be

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whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' Such words lead the soul into the Holy of Holies, and it is well for us to store our memories with such passages, which are a suitable channel for the feelings of preacher and people.

(5) Prayers should be short. This, however, depends upon circumstances and persons. Some people can pray for ten minutes without wearying a congregation, while others will tire it in two. In some services neither length nor brevity is noticed. If, however, a prayer wearies, it is too long. Whitefield said of a man he heard pray : ' He prayed me into a good frame of mind, but he prayed me out again by praying too long.' Prayers are frequently made too long by dragging into them irrelevant matter. There is no need to enter into elaborate descriptions of the things asked for, as, for example, in praying for soldiers, telling the Lord how brave they are, or, for prisoners, telling Him how bad they are. It is astonishing how many causes and interests can be introduced into a short prayer if it be put into Litany form. It is well to divide our public prayer into two or three parts. At any rate, the practice of one long prayer at the beginning of a service is a bad one. If there is to be one only, let it come nearer the middle, so that all worshippers may have the chance of joining in it ; if it is at the beginning, late-comers are frequently cut off from prayer altogether.

(6) Lastly, public prayer needs to be prepared for,

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Not that prayers should be written and learned, but prepared for by meditation upon the needs of the people, upon the happenings of the week, upon the families that make up the congregation. As these are reflected upon, ideas will fall into order, and so the prayers will be saved from that incoherence which is so frequently their bane. The heart needs preparation, and this is best made by prayer privately, for the more vividly we realize our own needs, the more keenly shall we feel those of others.

7. The last act of worship is the *benediction*. This is a request for a parting blessing; not a blessing pronounced by the minister, but one unitedly invoked by minister and people. Hence it is more seemly to say, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c., 'be with *us* all' than 'with *you* all,' which savours too much of the priest. The minister is not an intermediary, but a leader in worship, and this from beginning to end. This suggests the final word. In all these exercises the minister himself must be a worshipper: he is not doing something for others, but just one joining with the rest. Therefore, let him join in every part as far as his strength will permit—in singing the hymns, in repeating the responses. The congregation looks to him as an example in worship as in other things, and he will encourage and inspire his people by entering into the service heartily and sincerely himself.

X

The Preacher in his Study

JUST as a merchant needs his office, and a draper his shop, so a preacher requires a study—a room that he can call specifically his own, sacred to the higher uses of his calling.

I. Firstly, this room should be a *workshop*; in structure it ought to be suitable to its purpose. But frequently a manse is built without due attention being paid to the study, which is like putting up a blacksmith's premises without a smithy, or a merchant's stores without an office. Where this is the case, then, let the best room in the house be set apart for this purpose—the brightest, the cosiest, and the most airy. Let it have in it a few pictures of great preachers and saintly men. The chief furniture, however, of a study is its books, and upon the selection of these a minister will be guided by his purse and tastes. His choice, however, should be based upon one principle—quality, not quantity. In filling up the cases, see that the volumes are arranged, not according to their size, or the colour of the binding, but according to the subject-matter—*theology* on one shelf, *philosophy* on another, &c., so

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that if the room were entered in the dark the occupant would be able to lay his hand on the book required. Also let the books most frequently used be nearest to hand. Seek to keep the study orderly : private letters and personal matters in one place, circuit documents and church correspondence in another, and some enclosure for the literary lumber—the drift-wood of the profession—which is always accumulating, for orderly surroundings help to orderliness of mind.

I. The work attempted in this workshop should be done in a workmanlike manner. It must not be *called* a study merely, but *be* one ; not a reclining-room, nor reception-room, but a workshop ; for what a studio is to the artist, and a laboratory to the chemist, so a study should be to the minister. It must be a continuation college, with no governor but the minister himself, and where books are the professors. A youth when he leaves school is said to have 'finished his education,' so the idea prevails that when a minister leaves college he has completed his learning, and can say good-bye to languages, to philosophy, and even to theology. But no graver mistake could be made, for what is worth studying in college is worth continuing. There is no finality to the discovering and understanding of truth. Theology, like other sciences, is progressive ; and if a preacher is to keep abreast of theological movements he must not bate a jot of his interest, nor relax a unit of his endeavour. Indeed, college life is a kind of apprenticeship, where we learn how to

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work, and where the tools are given with which to labour. Instead of ending toil, leaving college is only its real beginning.

When the hour of release arrives and study is no longer compulsory, there is a great need for watchfulness ; this change is a great crisis, for the habits during the first years of freedom will determine the entire future. If careful plans of work are laid, and studious habits formed, all will be well ; but if you allow yourselves to drift at this period the drifting will probably continue. This advice is doubly necessary if a man has indolent inclinations. A candidate was once asked, 'What is original sin ?' and replied, 'I don't know what other people's might be, but I rather think mine is laziness.' To some ministers neglect of study is a real temptation, especially those who are ready speakers, and able to express themselves without much preparation. The facile speaker, as also the busy man, thinks that study is a waste, and that life is too short and too precious to be used up in thinking. Such an idea is sadly wrong, and to follow it is suicidal, for the man who neglects his study will lack staying power. He may be temporarily brilliant, but his coruscations will be of short duration ; like fireworks, they will soon fizzle out. The study is the stay of the pulpit. It is the secret mine from which the golden ore of truth is dug, and there will soon be no bullion to mint into current coin if this be closed down. You hear a man preach powerfully, and say, 'What a wonderful gift he has ; he is quite a genius.' Yes ;

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but the shot and shell he is firing so effectively are forged in quite another place.

It is said that Solomon's Temple was reared without the sound of hammer or axe being heard. The trees were felled, the wood planed, and the stone quarried far away from the sacred site; so in the study the sound of busy tools is heard, in the pulpit is the quiet rearing of the fabric.

The work to be done needs careful arrangement. It is a good plan to attend to all correspondence, and business arising out of it, immediately after breakfast. Never let correspondence accumulate, because it has to be re-read and so wastes time, and also because it is a discourtesy to a correspondent to delay a reply. It is a good thing to map out the hours—so many for reading, so many for sermonizing, and so many for miscellaneous work. Care must be taken of the odds and ends of time. These are important in the full, busy life of a minister. The Bishop of London (Dr. Ingram) tells us that he makes his speeches while shaving and dressing, and that he could not get through his work if he did not use up the odd moments in this way. Anyhow, give the morning to the most important and serious work, for then the mind is freshest, most alert, and vigorous. Do not let any whim or mood turn you aside from doing this. There is a real danger of a minister becoming a slave to moods. He cannot work, so he says, unless he feels like it: a doctrine this for lotus-eaters and not Spartans. Its underlying dictum is

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'Let us follow our moods and do as we please.' Trace this to its logical issue, and where does it lead? The clerk will be coming to the office, saying, 'I am in the wrong mood for adding up figures to-day; excuse my taking a walk in the Park.' The journalist will be going to the editor, telling him that the leading article cannot be finished for to-morrow's issue, so the paper must come out with a blank page. Or some may be saying to the professors to-morrow morning, 'I don't feel like attending classes to-day, I am not in the mood for Greek verbs or Hebrew roots; please excuse me.' 'Unless I feel like it'—bah! are we molluscs or men, automata or free agents? 'The first business of the preacher is to conquer the tyranny of moods,' and to be able and ready for work when the right time comes. He should spend, at least his mornings, in real work, and if circumstances prevent him from putting in his four hours on one day, he must make it up the next. Get so much work done within the week he must, for his success in the long run depends upon it.

2. What he shall work at is a question that an outsider cannot well dictate, but all he does should have either a direct or indirect bearing upon his calling; for when he seeks to become a specialist in any other sphere than his own, he is unfair to his ideal and recreant to his vow. He is not free to make any one branch of study an end in itself; he has no right to devote himself exclusively, say, to botany, astronomy, philosophy, or to languages.

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He, of course, is free to seek a general knowledge of these and all other things that will help him in his work ; but they must ever be means and not ends. Science may be studied, but studied so that the preacher may better understand the *religious* bearing of natural phenomena and of man's relation to the cosmos ; and, also, that he may be furnished with apt illustrations of higher truths. Languages may be mastered, not in order that he may become a linguist, but that he may better interpret his great text-book.

There is a real danger of the studious minister specializing out of his own sphere, and of becoming intellectually selfish. The ministry frequently attracts to it men with a deep thirst for knowledge, to whom books are a delight and with whom reading is a passion ; and so the study, with its cloistered quietude, is a great allurements. Such men are tempted to make the acquisition of knowledge an end in itself, and not subservient to their life-work. The *Athenæum* once said of Lord Acton, the learned historian, 'Lord Acton's search for knowledge became so absorbing a passion that the desire to set it forth had largely decayed.' Of at least a few ministers it may be said they have a passion for learning which is decreasing their passion to minister. This is a very refined form of selfishness, and the very opposite of that to which the man with popular gifts is exposed ; but it may, nevertheless, as effectually damage the sacrificial spirit. A minister must be a specialist in one direction only,

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in presenting the gospel of the Cross to the world. If, however, this ideal be kept in view, then let him study as diligently and as widely as he can.

II. The preacher's study should be a *sanctuary*—a place of refuge whereinto he can make his escape from the cares of the household and the worries of the church, the heat of controversy and the clash of conflict; where the pursued spirit can rest itself in the presence of smiling book-friends, and bathe itself in the calming atmosphere of a thousand helpful memories. But it is an asylum that needs to be jealously guarded.

1. Beware of day-dreams, of allowing the hours to slip by in mere reverie; for 'brown study' is not real study. The preacher is apt to think that if he is only in his study, and allowing a succession of thoughts to pass dreamily through his mind, he is studying. Such dreaming is encouraged by a too comfortable environment—the soft couch, pillowed chair, the soothing pipe—which combine to produce a luring, lulling effect most inimical to real study.

2. Beware, too, of the fidgets—the feeling that comes over a student in about half an hour that there is something else to be done other than the task in hand—some little domestic or other matter, nothing in itself, that will take only a few minutes to do: the dog requires taking out for an airing; the bird in the sitting-room needs some seed; the plants in the greenhouse require watering; or, being a fine morning, the garden might have attention. So the pen is put into the stand, the book turned face

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downward, and away we go, intending to be back again in a few minutes, when the reading will be resumed, and the sermon pushed on another stage. Yes, the intention is good; but no sooner are we interested in these little tasks than we are led on, and, before we are aware, the thief has entered the house and stolen the golden hours. There needs more determination than appears to suppress these restless desires, and to prevent them from leading us away from the clear path of duty.

3. Beware of two other intruders—the novel and the newspaper. They must, of course, be included in your reading, but should not be allowed to interfere with serious study. Let them be taken up when the brain needs relaxation, or in an evening when the mind is worried and the body tired. A book of fiction under such conditions is a real blessing. But a story may become so interesting overnight as to become a teasing temptation next morning. It lies on the book-shelf close at hand, a laughing temptress begging for just an hour before work is begun. Yes, ‘I should like to know how those two got out of their difficulty, and whether or not the plot of the traitor was discovered. Just a peep; only a peep.’ Alas! alas! Too late! Delilah has been among our locks, and the Philistines are upon us. The moral is—keep books of fiction right away from the study, stored in some nook like that in which the housewife stores her confections, to be brought out only for dessert.

The newspaper is, perhaps, a greater thief of the

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preacher's time. Newspapers must be read, but, speaking generally, they are necessary evils, and are not of much real value to the student. He can fritter away upon them valuable time, and read them until he knows nothing, and until he loses the power for original and independent thought. As they are usually delivered in a morning, there is a strong temptation to waste the best part of the day upon them. It is a good arrangement for the paper to be delivered after midday or in the evening, by which plan we are freed from at least one temptation.

4. Then beware also of another invader—the visitor. Many people regard the minister's study as an office, open at any time to callers on business ; and they seem to have no idea that his time is precious. Or, if they do apprehend this, they argue that *they* do not intrude very often, forgetting that many others argue in the same manner. A single visitor stays only just one half-hour ; but being followed by four others, who claim the same attention, two precious hours are stolen from the day, and half the working span is gone. And what is it all about ? The first is a man out of employment, and as you have socialistic leanings you must listen. He has got your name from the chapel notice-board, and so uses it correctly, and with a familiar accent, as if he had known you for years ; indeed he did know a man of your name in the South, and heard you preach a most eloquent and masterly sermon on the previous Sunday. He is sorry to trouble you, you are the first he has ever

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approached ; but if you would lend him—he is no mendicant—three shillings, he would be able to get his tools out of pawn, and to go straight to work at once. Here the curtain falls. What you do with him will depend upon your credulity and the state of your funds. The next is a book-vendor representing a firm bringing out a unique History of Religion, which, of course, is only issued to subscribers and cannot be bought in the outside market, and will therefore be worth more second-hand than new. You can believe it if you wish, and give him your name ; if you don't, then be prepared for another ten minutes' argument upon the merits of a Homiletic Encyclopaedia which will make sermonizing easy — a veritable penny-in-the-slot machine. Then the maid ushers in a deputation from an anti-something society, and if you will only consent to make a speech at the meeting they are organizing, the object aimed at will be accomplished. You have just time to settle down, thinking that at last there will be peace, when an official of the church, whose duty it is to put people into seats in the back gallery, calls to ask if you will visit two people who came to the service last Sunday, who, if only seen by the minister—and they are at home this morning—might become regular and valuable attendants of the church.

This may be putting matters facetiously, but there is, as you will find, deep truth behind it ; for unless there be a careful allotment of time, visitors will make serious work wellnigh impossible. If the

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euphemy 'not at home,' meaning that you cannot be seen, is ever justifiable, it is on the lips of a minister's maid who knows that her master is trying to prepare a sermon. Better than this is a wise and sympathetic wife, who will act as a good sentinel, and when visitors come upon unimportant business will arrest their progress towards the study, and divert them, *via* the sitting-room, with a few pleasant words, into the street again.

5. Beware of a quieter intruder than any one of these—the letter of invitation to preach or speak. Such requests are palatable to one's pride, and it is so easy to say 'yes' when the pay-day is some distance off. But the price *has* to be paid—in neglect of more important work and more thorough preparation. The pressure in this direction is much increased in these days when agencies for good are multiplied, which a minister is anxious to help. But he frequently does this at the expense of more solid work; and by trying to do too much does less. Robert Hall used to say that when the devil saw that a minister was likely to be useful in a church, his way of disposing of him was to get on his back and ride him to death with engagements (Dr. Stalker). There is danger of 'bustle all the week and baldness on the Sunday.' And the bustle may assume other forms than numerous speaking engagements—as e.g., socials, sewing-teas, committees, &c.

III. The study 'should be an *oratory*,' a place of prayer as well as of toil; a Holy of Holies filled

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with a sacred atmosphere in which the preacher's life and work should be bathed. Whether the divine blessing is directly invoked on each task or not, the divine Presence should permeate the place. The devotional temper should be encouraged here by specific acts of devotion—the reading of God's Word, and the offering up of specific prayer. As critical and inquiring students of the divine Word we are apt to forget to read it devotionally, and for the specific purpose of feeding our own religious life. Dr. Horton tells us that each day he spends so much time in devotional reading of the Word, and does so frequently upon his knees. We are all readers of the Word, but there is a wide difference between reading it for sermonizing purposes and as a medium of blessing to our own souls; and there is a real danger of reading it in one way only. As to how we shall pray in this private way will be a matter for individual settlement. It may be done as we sit in our chair, or kneeling by it, or standing; whichever attitude best helps, let that be adopted. Bishop Moule says, 'I seldom venture to kneel in secret; my mind and heart are best quickened by reverently standing in the presence of my Lord.' The study prayer should consist of more than petitions for personal blessing and guidance; it should bear the minister's people before the Lord.

If the study be used in some such ways as these the preacher will not be a used-up man at forty, but 'will bring forth fruit in his old age.' He will

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not be one of those who will have to go begging for a circuit. But if he ceases mental work and does not keep his intellect fresh by continual use, then failure will be written across his life, for dry-rot does not more surely eat away the timbers of a building than indolence eats out a minister's power and usefulness.

XI

Free Church Orders and Authority

THE Free Churches recognize, as really as do the Roman Catholic and Anglican, an official ministry, an order of men set apart for regular and specific church duties. The present-day form of the ministry may differ from that of the Acts and the Epistles, but the germ of a separate ministry exists not only in these writings but also in Christ's call of the apostles and the commission He gave them. In that commission there is no set form of church orders, but it does contain the substance of an official ministry. 'Church order is not a scheme delivered by the Lord to the apostles, . . . but it was a "principle" of which the commission was the essence.'¹ Dr. Moberly goes on to assume that this 'principle' contained the threefold orders of his Church—bishops, priests, and deacons. We have no wish to dispute this assumption, but we refuse to admit that the 'principle' did not contain other forms of ministry than that of his own Church. The Presbyterian and Methodist forms are as implicit in it as the Anglican.

¹ Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 25.

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The New Testament Scriptures testify to many kinds of ministry in the early Church—‘apostles, prophets, teachers, healings, helps, tongues’; but, broadly speaking, they can be grouped into two classes—official and unofficial. In the Church there were many members who had helpful and edifying gifts, but who were not set apart officially. ‘Cutting across the regularly constituted ministerial offices there is a great variety of special spiritual graces or endowments in individual church members.’¹

All branches of the Church in every age, with but few exceptions, have recognized an official ministry. The most modern exceptions are found in the Society of Friends and the Plymouth Brethren. These communities hold that a separate ministry has two defects.

1. It tends to develop sacerdotalism and all the evils of priestcraft, and also fosters religious formalism in the Church rather than spiritual life. It must be admitted that the Church at times has become formal, and that the ministry has fallen from its spiritual altitudes, becoming dead, or masterful and self-assertive. But because an institution has been abused it does not follow that it is false or unnecessary.

2. It is also contended that such a ministry interferes with the liberty of individual believers, who are hindered from exercising the gifts of teaching and testimony in their gatherings, and that little room is left for the free play of the ever-present,

¹ Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 168.

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inspiring Spirit. Without doubt this freedom of utterance was a conspicuous feature in the gatherings of the early Church, and is most commendable and needful. But a regular ministry does not necessarily interfere with such a practice, for at least in some of the Free Churches, particularly in Methodism, liberty to prophesy is not only admissible but is encouraged.

In spite of possible abuses, an official ministry has been, and is still, necessary to the Church's well-being, if not to her existence—necessary to orderliness, efficiency, and completeness. The Church primarily is a spiritual organism, but, like all other such organisms in mundane conditions, requires some sort of embodiment to make it perfect. Just as man, who is primarily spirit, needs a body to make his entity complete, so the Church on earth needs a medium to embody and express its life, and this its officers and ministers supply. St. Paul speaks of the Church as a body and of ministers as its members (Eph. iv. 11, 12). These are closely related and mutually dependent. Primarily speaking, bodily members are dependent upon the body. They share its life, and have no existence apart from it. So the church body is the source of the minister's life, and he cannot exist apart from it. But, on the other hand, the body is dependent upon its members—upon hands, feet, eyes, and ears. It cannot do its work, or really live, without them. So is it with the Church. It has life in itself, but needs ministerial organs in order to make that

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life effective and to develop its energies. The eye cannot say 'I am independent of the body,' nor can the body say, 'I can see without the eye.' As the body and its members are needful to each other's life and well being, so are the ministry and the Church.

But while the Church, as a whole, recognizes the necessity of an official ministry, and considers it to be of biblical origin, widely different views are held touching the character and functions of the ministry, its exact relationship to the Church, and the means by which it is continued and propagated. There are, however, only two views that really antagonize each other—the Catholic, both Roman and Anglican, and the Protestant.

I. The Roman Catholic and High Anglican position. In these Churches the minister is a mediating priest—mediating between the Church and her Head—and is an indispensable channel of divine grace. He claims this unique position, not because he is elected to it by the Church, but because he has been appointed to it by God Himself. He holds this right to mediate because he has received a divine commission from the Son of God coming through the apostles and their episcopal successors. And only those who are thus set apart and are in the direct line of descent are true ministers. 'None can be held to be divinely commissioned until he has received commission on earth from those who had themselves received the authority to commission from such as held it in like manner before them.'¹ No

¹ Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 106.

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matter how clear his own consciousness may be that he ought to minister, or how emphatic the call of his Church may be, unless he can trace his ordination to episcopal hands such a man is not a minister; his office is altogether invalid. Such a conception of orders as this makes ministerial ordination a mechanical and unspiritual thing, and also renders the appointment of all who hold such views most precarious and uncertain, for unless the consecrating bishop can trace his episcopal pedigree up to the apostles, and be sure that no links in the chain are missing, he cannot be a channel of authority, nor the candidate be made a true minister; he is a hireling, and not a shepherd. And if this be so, mediation also may be a fiction and the salvation of the flock be in jeopardy.

Now some of the fairest and keenest students of church history say that the episcopal line is not unbroken, and that many links are missing. History has proved that Apostolic Succession is an ecclesiastical figment, and that the hierarchical 'bishop' is a third-century, or at most a second-century, creation, and, this being so, he is much less a New Testament officer. In the New Testament the word 'bishop' occurs several times, but generally it is used interchangeably with the word 'presbyter.' 'The names *πρεσβύτερος* and *ἐπίσκοπος* are practically interchangeable.'¹ This officer and the deacon, or elder, make up the two forms of the official ministry of the New Testament. Therefore, when tried at the bar

¹ Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 144.

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of Scripture and church history, Apostolic Succession fails to carry a verdict. 'Apostolic Succession,' says Canon Hensley Henson, 'as the title-deeds to an exclusive hierarchy, is a fiction. . . . It cannot, in this conventional sense, be justified at the bar of historical science.'

There was a kind of episcopacy in the time of Ignatius ; but, as Lightfoot shows, the Ignatian bishop makes no claim to apostolic succession ; he is a congregational and not a diocesan officer, and exercises no sacerdotal functions. But suppose the link were traceable up to St. Peter, or to another of the twelve apostles, what about St. Paul ? He was not one of the Twelve, and was ordained at Antioch by men who were not themselves apostolically ordained ; consequently St. Paul himself, on this theory, was not in holy orders ; he was no minister, neither was Timothy, nor Titus, who were ordained by him. A conception of the ministry that excludes St. Paul cannot be correct. It almost appears as if the Apostle of the Gentiles had been regarded by men of his day as an outsider, and had been twitted with not being a minister, for there seems to be a triumphant flinging back of the innuendo in his challenging words : ' Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.' Nor was the New Testament method of ordination episcopal, nor indeed that of the sub-apostolic Church. The latter point is conceded by Dr. Moberly. ' It was,' he says, ' in some instances performed by non-episcopal presbyters '¹ ;

¹ *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 112.

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and Hooker, one of the greatest of English Churchmen, admits that 'there may be sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow ordination without a bishop.'

II. The Reformed Church, or Protestant, view of orders.

In Protestantism the Church is primary and the ministry secondary, a view in harmony with New Testament teaching. In sacerdotal churches the ministry is primary, and considered necessary to the very existence of the Church. 'No bishop no ministry, no ministry no Church.' The ministry is not only the Church's conservator, but its creator also. But to place the ministry first is to invert the true order, which is first the Church and then the ministry. According to the Christian Scriptures, the one priesthood is that of believers, who are made in Christ Jesus 'priests unto God.' And it is from, and by, this priesthood or body of believers that the ministry is appointed; elected for the twofold purpose of preaching the word and shepherding the flock. Consequently, whatever authority or powers a minister possesses, they belong to the Church body. 'He is one of the "organs of the Church's priesthood."' 'Ministers are representative organs of the brotherhood through whom its public and organized activities can be carried on.'¹ Even Canon Liddon, High Churchman as he was, says, as quoted by Bishop Gore: 'The difference between clergy and laity is not a difference of kind, but of function.'²

¹ Dykes, *The Christian Minister*, p. 12.

² *University Sermons*, p. 198.

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The eye performs a different function from the foot, but does not differ from it, because it shares with the foot the life of the body, so a minister is one with the Church. He is 'regarded as a priest because he is the mouthpiece, the representative of a priestly race.'¹ Not only in the New Testament, but also in the writings of the sub-apostolic age, including the *Didache*, and even the Epistles of Ignatius, the Church, and not its ministry, is placed first in importance.

Now, if the Church be primary, it follows that any officers it calls into its ministry have a valid ordination, for the validity of orders is vested in the Church, and not in any ecclesiastical hierarchy; in the people, and not in a bishop. In Protestantism a genuine ministry does not depend upon the existence of an order of bishops, although some Protestants use them as channels for ordination. There are branches of the true Church that have such officers, and branches that have not. A bishop may be a very useful officer, and is regarded by some as the crown and flower of Church development. It may even be that a Church, episcopally equipped, is better governed than any other. But if this be conceded, it does not follow that such an order is necessary to the Church's existence or to the validity of its ministry: expediency does not mean necessity. We may even go a step further and admit that episcopacy is implicit in Christ's commission, and that in the early Church 'there

¹ Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 256.

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is invariably found behind and above presbyterate the background of episcopate'¹; but it does not involve the exclusion of churches governed non-episcopally, nor the expulsion of ministers who have not been ordained by a diocesan bishop. As other types of ministry exist than the episcopal, they have as much right to claim to exist potentially in Christ's commission as it has. A non-episcopal ministry is valid because it serves in Churches as truly established by the apostles as any other.

As Methodists, we claim to be a branch of the true Church, because we have the 'notes' and bear the marks of such a church. In the Book of Common Prayer, Article XIX, a Church is defined thus: 'The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance.' Under the terms of this definition we claim to be a real Church, and, being such, have the right to ordain our own ministry.

This claim, I know, is repudiated by a great number, possibly a majority, of the clergy of the Church of England, who act as if Methodism were no real Church, and also as if her orders were invalid, and many of them speak as they act. It is nothing, in their view, that this Church manifests an apostolic spirit, and does apostolic deeds, and that its ministers are holy men, mighty in word and deed. Because

¹ Moberly, loc. cit. p. 215.

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Methodism does not recognize episcopal government, it is regarded as an heretical sect, and its ministers, because they are not episcopally ordained, as schismatics and intruders. Now a theory of church orders that does this, stands condemned at the bar of reason and history. The episcopal Church claims to be Catholic, it almost monopolizes the name; but it is more truly named Sectarian, for its attitude is not Catholic, but is that of a bigoted sect. In the words of Dr. Fairbairn, 'True Catholicism must be as comprehensive as the action of God.' The exclusions made by such a church theory take from it the right to use a term so broad and inclusive as 'Catholic.'

Presbyterianism, with its learned and talented ministry, and with Scottish history behind it, is not a true Church, and its ministry is non-apostolic. Methodism, with its fervent evangelism, its world-wide propaganda, and with Welsh and American history behind it, is not a real Church nor are its ministers truly ordained. 'Methodism,' as Isaac Taylor long since pointed out, 'offers a capital instance for the theory of Apostolic Succession to try itself upon.' If the theory be correct, then this great Church must be put outside the fold and its ministers handed over to the 'uncovenanted' mercies of God.

Then consider what great and holy men it cuts off from the ministry and what poor specimens it sometimes admits. No matter how feeble in brain, how unlettered, or how evil in life a man may be,

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so long as he is episcopally ordained he is in Apostolic Succession and a real minister, while men like John Bunyan, Thomas Chalmers, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon are not ministers at all. A view that makes such inclusions and expulsions cannot be the one established by Jesus and handed on by His apostles. Still, while the Roman and Greek Churches take this attitude, and also many clergy of the Anglican communion, it is a joy to know that there are numbers in the latter Church, some of whom occupy high places, who think and speak differently. Prominent among these stands Canon Henson, who, in spite of considerable opposition and some ostracism, is bravely contending for the legitimacy of the Free Churches and for the validity of the Free Church ministry. These are his words : ' An unprejudiced and careful study of our own time compels us to admit that non-episcopal ministers are not less effective than our own ; that sacraments by them are, equally with ours, channels of divine grace, and that all the tokens of the Holy Spirit's presence are evident in them as in us ; therefore by what right can we continue to exclude them from our fellowship ? '

But while external authority is of little value to the Free Churches, they regard spiritual authority as of great importance. This is demanded by the people from the minister in large measure. As an ambassador of the King they have a right to ask for his ' letters of authority.' These are to be found, however, not in outward parchments, but in

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a certain quality of character and experience ; they are dynamical rather than mechanical.

1. The foundations of spiritual authority lie in an evangelical experience ; of sins forgiven and cleansed away. A preacher who does not know himself to be forgiven and saved cannot carry a convincing message of grace to others. Like the blind man of the Gospel, he must be able to testify, ' One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see.' A man without such an experience will command little attention and but few followers.

2. Such authority, also, must have in it a mystical element : the preacher must be conscious of oneness with God through union with Christ. The secret of Christ's authority lay in His unique relation to the Father. God was to him a clear, living presence above all others. He had, also, intimate fellowship with His Father. He came out, as it were, daily from His presence-chamber, and thus His word was with power. So Christ's minister, if his words are to carry conviction, must know a similar fellowship. It is the man who comes down from the mount, where he has had audience with the King, with his face aglow like that of Moses, who overawes the multitude and makes it listen to his message.

3. Another element in spiritual authority is the preacher's consciousness of his call and commission. The real minister feels such a call as ' fire in his bones.' Jesus said to His disciples : ' As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you.' A consciousness of this sustained and armed Him, as it sustains and

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authorizes every minister. There are times when the preacher doubts his commission; and what wonder, when he remembers his frailty? But such misgivings are a passing mood only. He realizes that God is sending him. But, it is asked, may not a man make a mistake and think he is called when he is not? Impulses toward such an office are not always true, and need to be tested and corroborated. The inner call needs to be ratified by the Church. The call must be twofold, inward and outward, personal and official; and when these two voices blend, the call may be regarded as genuine. A consciousness of such a commission gives to its subject a sense of certainty, and to his words the element of authority. The minister, like the prophet of all ages, speaks with command because he is sure that God has sent him. Moses was able to go to Pharaoh, and lead his people out of the land of bondage, because he had heard the Voice of God out of the midst of the Bush in Horeb. Elijah was able to return from self-exile, to recover his courage, and to continue his struggle with false prophets because while in the mountain cave he had heard God in the 'still small voice.' Paul became the dauntless Apostle of the Gentiles because he had heard the voice of Jesus on his way to Damascus. So with all who have been able to command men: part of their experience has been the consciousness that they were called of God.

4. Another source of authority is the possession of a body of evangelical truth intellectually apprehended

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and tremendously believed—God's love, the God-head of Christ, Redemption, the ever-living Spirit. When truths such as these have gripped the preacher's mind and become part of his experience, then his word rises to an authoritative 'Thus saith the Lord.'

5. A further note of authority is the ability to interpret life to men and women. The man who can unlock the human heart, explain its vague longings, and quiet its strife, he whose word 'finds me,' is the man to whom I give credence and esteem.

It is said of Coleridge that he was 'as familiar with the avenues of the soul as Wordsworth was with the dales of Westmorland.' This is an intimacy which all who minister should covet. Nor is it enough to apply truth in an abstract and psychological way, but it is necessary also to make it applicable to present-day needs and environment. He will speak with authority who can apply the gospel to the intellectual and social problems of the age. It is the old gospel for which he is responsible; at the same time it is that gospel put into the thought-forms of the twentieth century. For a man with even a great eighteenth-century message the present day cares little. Authority comes through power to adapt the message to the judgement and needs of men living here and now. The authority of the great Fathers of the Church lay in their ability to translate the gospel into the language of their day, and the men who can do this

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for the present age will be their real children and in the true Apostolic Succession.

6. Finally, authority finds its climax in a selfless character and sacrificial spirit. It was this quality, so pre-eminent in the life of Jesus, that gave such power to His ministry. It is true that the Cross came at the close of His career, but the spirit of that final tragedy saturated His whole life. The crimson thread ran through the whole life-fabric. The footprints upon the entire road were blood-stained. The sacrifice was completed on Calvary, but the pathway leading up to it lay through more than one Gethsemane. And it was the fact that He was every day forgetting Himself and willing to lay down His life for the people that made them hear Him 'gladly.' It is the same spirit which gives the final touch of command to a minister's voice. If it be known that the spirit of the Cross has entered into his life, it is felt that here is a man who has a claim to be heard. This man's word will find its way by a peculiar directness into many hearts. On the other hand, if it becomes known that a minister is self-seeking, or even is indifferent to that which is sacrificial, his word falls without weight or power. It is he who 'hateth his own life' whose words are those of 'one having authority.'

If the marks at which I have here only barely hinted be present in a minister's spirit and life, the priest may question his authority, but the people will acknowledge it and will ask for no other credentials.

PART II
THE MINISTER AS PASTOR

XII

Organizing a Church

THE Protestant conception of the Church differs from the Romanist. The central idea in the latter is the priesthood ; while in the former it is the body of Christian believers. In Protestantism every man in Christ Jesus is made ' a priest unto God ' ; hence the duties of the Protestant pastor differ from those of the priest. The chief work of the Romish priest is to act on behalf of the people—to do something for them which they cannot do for themselves ; while that of the Protestant pastor is to enlist the interest and co-operation of the whole body of believers—the one true priesthood—in every department of Church activity.

In Protestantism the Church is primary, the minister secondary ; the first emphasis is upon the Church, and not upon the pastor. This one body of believers, however, is developed through the establishment and growth of separate churches. No sooner does a person become a believer in Jesus Christ than he desires to enter into fellowship with others having a similar experience ; and ' where two or three are gathered together ' in Christ's name

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there is the essence of a Christian church. But not only is there a tendency to come thus together—a kind of natural spiritual gravitation—but it is the duty of individual Christians to form themselves into communities; no man is a true Christian who seeks to live an isolated life—such a wish and aim are alien to the spirit of the faith. But a church is more than an aggregation of persons having some affinity for each other; it is a body of men and women who have made Christ central, and who are moved by a common enthusiasm to make His kingdom universal. Consequently any community claiming to be a church must be more than a friendly society; more than an ethical, social, or even evangelical agency. It is a body of men and women, which, reflecting the spirit and repeating the acts of the Master, is endowed with such powers as He has guaranteed, and preserves such symbols as He has sanctioned; and any leader or minister essaying to establish a community falling short of this may have started a club, but he has not erected a church. Wherever and whatever your sphere of labour may be, seek not merely to gather people together into a congregation, but seek to create a real Christian church.

But a community may possess and manifest the criteria of a true church, and yet, through lack of organization, fail adequately to fulfil all the functions of a church. The presence of power is no guarantee of results. Power, in order to become efficient, needs to be well controlled and rightly directed. And, in

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this work of directing the energies of a church, the minister is expected to take the lead. Usually a pastor is called to a church or circuit which is already formed and more or less organized, but occasionally he is selected to do pioneer work—to open up a new cause in a new neighbourhood, and to organize from the base. For such a work a minister with considerable powers of initiative is required, and other methods and tactics need to be pursued than under ordinary circumstances.

As to how a minister should proceed in such a case will depend upon many things—upon the material he has to work upon, the assistance he can command, and the place where he proposes to enter. If the opening be in a city or town, the methods followed will differ from those necessary in the country. Our usual practice as a church has been to hold open-air services, and then to induce some sympathetic friend to open his or her house for regular preaching and other services, and from this humble beginning to proceed to form a church and build a chapel. This has succeeded in the past, and may do still for the village, but it is obsolete for the town. Not that preaching in the open air in the town is out of date ; such work is a fine preliminary to a new cause. Let a band of men and women take their stand in a selected locality, and continue there week after week, singing, praying, preaching, putting up men to speak who have some natural gift, and the people of the neighbourhood will become interested and influenced, so that when further steps are taken—say

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the hiring of a hall, or the erection of temporary premises—there will be found a number of sympathizers ready to help. But a building of some kind—the more commodious and attractive the better—must be a foregone conclusion in every new movement in town and city.

Having touched the locality through missioning, and, having got your shelter, the remainder is fairly clear. Start a Sunday school, form a class, and select your officers. But in this be very careful. The best person to put at the head is yourself; the *next* best a tried and tested man who has settled in the locality. If he be not available, send one from another church, and, if neither course be possible, defer action altogether and save your strength, for to put at the head an untried person is to court failure. There will always be people of a sort attaching themselves to a new venture, who are eager for office; but beware of the religious nomad who goes peregrinating round all the churches, settling here and there for a few months, making great promises, but ending always in setting the few real friends of the movement at variance. However badly you may need officers, shun the church gipsies, for, as they have been no good to others, they will be of little service to you. Better have a few who are reliable, *tested* like Gideon's army, than a whole battalion of untried religious itinerants.

However, having succeeded in opening up a district, and in founding a church, establish as early as possible such organizations as circumstances may warrant.

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But most of you will enter into churches more or less organized ; probably *less* rather than more. If the sphere be one where the machinery is fairly good and running well, do not attempt to 'scrap' it. It may not be of the highest speed nor quite up to date ; still, if its output be generally satisfactory, do not be too ready to alter, or too much in a hurry to destroy. Give attention to speeding up rather than pulling down, for it is not wise to introduce change merely for the sake of change ; and, if it be at all possible, follow up the work of a predecessor rather than set it aside because it is not of your doing. But if you find a church *unorganized*, or *badly* organized, or *disorganized*, then set to work to change and mend. It would not be wise to attempt to give detailed instruction as to what agencies should be set up—for so much depends upon conditions and circumstances—but rather to lay down a few guiding principles.

1. Beware of the way in which a clearance of the ground is attempted. On entering a church or circuit, a minister discovers that there are many barriers in the way of progress. He finds men in positions who are not doing the work assigned them, or doing it badly, and certain things in operation that have served the church well in their day, but have become obsolete, and so feels that many things must be altered if progress is to be made. His conclusions are right in the main, but he will need to act with much care and tact lest the last state be worse than the first.

2. Do not begin reforms too early. This is an

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earnest man's danger. He is keen on work, he is throbbing with energy, and no sooner does he settle than he is surrounded with people who are eager to inform him of the faults of the officials. They prime him with all sorts of information, and tell him that the church will never prosper until this thing is changed and that altered, nor until this and the other person are removed from office—this man is a hindrance, and that woman is no good. Listen to it all, make a note of it, and get to know more, if possible ; but be slow to act. Wait until you have discovered more about your informants and have verified for yourself their statements, also until you know more of the character of the hinderer ; so that you may be the better able to deal with him when the time comes, and to decide whether you should seize the nettle by the stem, or sap its life by cutting off the roots. Let things run on in their usual grooves for at least the first six months, until knowledge has been perfected and until your hands grip the reins, because, if the clearance be attempted too early, and many changes introduced too soon, the object aimed at may be thwarted, sympathy alienated, and fears aroused ; for people are usually conservative in church matters, even if radical in politics, and resentfully they say, ' He is in a great hurry. What can he know about us ? He has only been here five minutes.'

3. Begin reforms at the easiest point and along the line of least resistance. It may be a brave thing to attack a chronic difficulty in a church at once,

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but it is not the wisest ; reserve that feat until you are sure of your forces, and have them well marshalled. Commence readjustment in the smaller and more private church organisms—the class-meeting, the prayer-meeting, the Christian Endeavour Societies, leaving the reform of the public service and change of officials until a more convenient season. Of course, if an official be guilty of some moral delinquency, then there must be no waiting. The temptation will be strong to let matters drift, with the hope that they will right themselves ; but, as it is with neglected wrong in the child, the disaster will be all the greater the longer its correction is postponed. But such cases are unusual. Generally the need for change arises from an official being unsuitable ~~for~~ his office, or of having neglected his work, or having grown too old for his task. A change is really necessary, but there are more ways than one of bringing it about. Instead of a *frontal* attack, try a flank or some other movement. Better than proposing a change in an open meeting is an effort to induce a man to offer his resignation. To accomplish this, keep on friendly terms with him, visit him, talk to him in a way that will lead him to see that a change would help the church and himself also, and get some other person to speak similarly. To accomplish the end in this way is worth a few months' waiting. If this course is not taken, be very sure of a majority in a meeting who will follow your lead. This is not always certain when it appears so, for frequently officials will talk about each other and

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declare a change must be made ; but when the matter is pressed to a crisis they will be found absent, or those who had differed widely become friends, and you are left in the lurch, and pass out from the meeting a defeated and, so far as influence is concerned, a much weaker man. But, when a promised resignation takes place, be sure to have a successor in readiness. Do not wait for the meeting to find one.

Another way of effecting a needful change is by a rear movement ; or, to use another figure, by the method of depletion. For example, a man who is unsuitable holds the office of class-leader. He has a few friends who respect him and cling to him, and would create a disturbance if he were ejected. Well, let him alone, and get the leaders to appoint a younger and more suitable man to start a new class, which they are usually willing to do, providing the *man* is in readiness. The inevitable happens. The younger people flock to the suitable man, and some of the older ones too ; consequently the old class dies of atrophy and the leader can do no other than resign. This is the positive rather than the negative method, driving out darkness by letting in the light, and an example of overcoming evil with good : a method that will frequently obviate a quarrel, and prevent wounded feelings and loss of members.

4. But in any reorganization be careful to retain a good proportion of men of years and experience. By natural predilection a young minister is drawn

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to the young men, and feels inclined to push them to the front. The older men are too slow, and he is anxious to make things 'go.' It is true that the young people are the driving-power of the church; but the church is in need of guidance as well as energy, and this can only come from men of experience. The engine must have steam in its cylinders if it is to go, but it also needs governors to keep it from running away. It is true the older officials have less fire and steam, but what is lost in movement is gained in staying power. The church, like other organizations, needs experience at the helm. Cloud and fire are amongst the permanent world-elements, and were chosen by Jehovah as the most suitable symbols to lead the hosts of Israel towards the land of promise. Do not dismiss the 'old set' in any wholesale way, and never forget that experience counts for much.

5. Then, again, do not introduce too many changes at once; usually one at a time is enough. Especially if it be the removal of some obstacle to progress, this advice should be observed. Also, it is not wise for a minister to open with too wide a programme, for there is a danger of the people taking fright, and of a disinclination to follow, even if there be no active opposition. Also, there is a danger that he may be unable to carry through all his proposed reforms; he has overloaded his wagons, with the result that the people not only lose confidence in the ability of their leader, but in his judgement also, and in the end less is done than if less were attempted. The

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motto in all organization should be, 'This one thing I do.'

6. Again, don't empty all your ideas on church work into every new sphere, because what may be suitable in one place may be *unsuitable* in another; methods adapted to the town are out of place in the country. It must never be forgotten that people in the country are more conservative and less ready for change than people in towns and cities; and town-trained ministers are apt to overlook this, and so either block their way in country circuits, or else grow impatient or despondent. A man has a set number of ideas as to how a circuit or church should be worked, as a barrel-organ has a set number of tunes, and every place he goes to must have his repertory; and so he steadily grinds through his stock of ideas. He believes in the anthem—it is a most attractive part of the service; and so he introduces it into every place, even though the choir is made up of a few boys and girls. Or he is great on the P.S.A., and so one must be started, although his church is in a village, with just a handful of class-meeting, prayer-meeting people. Or he holds strongly that no church can thrive without a Sister of the People, and so he agitates for this, although there is not the ghost of a chance of maintaining one. He has a vanload of ideas, and nothing will do but he must tip them all into every new circuit he enters. By all means have ideas—they are scarce things, and he who is wanted everywhere is the man with ideas; but also learn to use them with dis-

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crimination. Take out those that will suit the time and place, and let the rest remain in the store-room until they are wanted.

7. Do not over-organize, but leave room for spontaneous action, and for the play of the *spirit of life* present in all real churches. It is possible to have too much régime. Some churches, like some families, suffer from over-manipulation, just as others suffer from too little. Work may become quite mechanical and empty of verve, spring, and life. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' A church, like the mechanism in Ezekiel's vision, should have its wheels, and wheels within wheels; but there must also be in them, and working with them, the living spirit; mere machinery, we all know, is insufficient unaccompanied by the spirit of life. 'The spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.'

As to what agencies should be started and sustained, is not a question for immediate consideration. This will be discussed as we proceed.

8. But there is one principle in addition to those already mentioned that underlies the whole, viz. that of division of labour. A minister must not try to work his church *en masse*, but group the workers into such sections as may be suitable and necessary to the accomplishment of his purpose. I am not speaking now of the church as a religious body, or of different means of grace, or of meetings for the culture of spiritual life, but of the church as a working institution. And, regarding it in this relationship, I know of no better plan than

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to follow the practice of our municipal bodies, and divide the workers up into committees. In our borough councils the work is done not by the whole body, but by the different committees, each of which becomes responsible for the control of a certain department.

9. In seeking to reach his ideal, the pastor will find much need of patience and forbearance. He will frequently be tempted to cease battling with contrary winds, to rest on his oars, and let things drift. Or he may be tempted to run away from the task altogether, especially if there comes an invitation to what looks like an easier sphere; a spot so far away, and about which he knows so little, that it appears to be a very haven of rest. But under these circumstances there must be deep questioning. 'Have I finished my work here? Would the *Kingdom* be advanced by my going?' If not, then *hold on and forge ahead*. Take no heed of despondent feelings, refuse to be too sensitive to criticism, take little notice if here and there a few people say that a change of minister would be a good thing. A minister usually knows best when his work is done, and whether the time has come for moving on. He is, as a rule, more interested in the work than any other, and consequently sees the church's need more clearly than others. And if, after much prayer and careful thought, he feels that to remove would be against his conscience and best judgement, let him abide at his post; and usually, when this is the motive actuating him,

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there will be little opposition to his doing so, and difficulties will melt away as the snowdrift in the spring. Besides, for an earnest man to run from one difficulty will only mean running into another. Most spheres appear easy until they are entered, and then they are all hard enough. To the true minister there are no easy spheres. If any man is looking to this calling with the view of finding an easy place in life, he is making a grave mistake, and one he had better rectify at once, and here and now cry 'Halt!' doffing the mantle and flinging aside the insignia of office which have been and still may be worn and borne by worthier shoulders. No! there are no comfortable places for an earnest man, and all he can ever do is to change the kind of difficulty, and not escape from it. So the work you are called to do, continue, until the Divine Voice within bids you depart. Of course, the time will come when a change will be better for preacher and people. The specific task for which he went amongst them may be accomplished, or he may have grown out of sympathy with his people, and they with him. Differences may have arisen on the presentation of certain points of doctrine, social politics, or church management, which make a separation expedient, if not imperative.

In most Methodist churches the minister's stay is limited to a term of three years, which on the whole has worked admirably; but there is a tendency, especially in some branches of Methodism, to allow more elasticity, and to extend the term.

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In those churches where the limitation is lifted, let the minister lay his plans for a long rather than for a short period of service, and in all cases for as long a term as the limit will permit ; for the longer a good man remains amongst his people the greater will be his influence and success.

XIII

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THAT the Christian Church should be a developing body needs no argument ; for, as is the case physiologically, so is it spiritually, if the organism is not increasing, it has begun to decay. We read that the Early Church added to itself daily 'those that were being saved' ; and, when healthy, growth has marked every succeeding period of its history. And this, not only in the fresh fields of heathendom, but in nominally Christian countries, and especially in such as have an increasing population. Merely to 'hold our own' under such conditions cannot be regarded as satisfactory. Of course, numerical growth in a church is not always co-ordinate with growth in righteousness and love, nor the coming of the Kingdom synchronous with increased church attendance ; yet, broadly and generally speaking, church expansion has gone hand in hand with the advance of virtue and of the Christian spirit.

If a church be not developing, the time has come for inquiry on the part of minister and people into the reasons. Here, as in other realms,

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effects result from causes, and observe a sequence as marked and inevitable as day and night follow the revolution of the earth on its axis. Questions frank and fearless should be asked as to why the church is not advancing. Is it because the people attached to it are living a shallow religious life? Have they ceased to labour as they once did? Have they developed instead a complaining spirit? It has been aptly said that 'every congregation is composed of two classes—workers and grumblers. The workers never grumble, and the grumblers never work.' Does the cause lie in a spirit of indifference to the spiritual needs of the people outside the fold? If such inquiries be made, and made sincerely and earnestly, usually they will lead to something more—to increased activity and general progress. In all such inquiry, and in creating the conditions necessary for advance, the minister must unmistakably take the lead. He must himself be an earnest and godly man, burdened with the interests of the people; for the adage 'Like people like priest' is remarkably true, and a church is no better than its minister. He must also seek to grow a finer spirit amongst his people, and to arouse them to the need of better living and more earnest serving. To this end let him preach a course of sermons with this object in view, and use diligent efforts to revive interest in the means of grace—in other words, begin a mission in his own church to his local preachers, class-leaders, Sunday-school teachers, and members, making them to feel

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that things need altering, and that death and stagnation must give place to life and progress.

I. A church may be augmented in many ways. In these days and in this country its growth will be chiefly through the Sunday school, for at the present time there is a lack of either the machinery or the power to bring into the Church-fold the adult outsider. But we have the children with us, and if these could only be held, by the law of natural advance the world would be speedily gathered into the Church. As I purpose dealing with this subject in a subsequent lecture, however, I will only say at present that it will pay the minister to give the major portion of his energies and time to the children, and to use every legitimate means to secure their attachment to the church into which they have been baptized. Indeed, this is the logical outcome of the baptismal ordinance. In it the child has been dedicated to and sealed for Christ; the church practising the rite has given its sanction to these views, and so is doubly bound to use its utmost endeavours to retain the children within its fold by an open and personal confession of that faith which hitherto has been exercised by others on their behalf. To-day our attitude is, not that the children are the property of the devil up to a certain age, but that they, from the first, 'are Christ's, and a part of the Church, until they voluntarily separate therefrom.'

As to how the minister is to secure this outward confession and willing alliance will depend

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upon circumstances and himself. He may take the quieter way of the catechumen class and Christian Endeavour Society, or the more exciting method of the evangelistic service. If, however, he chooses to adopt the latter, let him be exceedingly careful not to unduly play upon the emotions, lest there be a rebound later to the other extreme. The organism of the child, religiously as well as physically, is very sensitive, and may easily suffer from over-much excitement. Besides, any attempt to force a religious experience, and to make it a replica of the experience of the adult, is likely to end in making the children either hypocrites or religious prigs. Religion is natural to the child ; let him be led into it in a quiet, simple, and natural way.

II. A common method of development, and indeed, until recently, almost the only one amongst our people, has been the Revival Mission. While I think we have often leaned too heavily upon this form of ingathering, it has been fruitful in results, and it is a right thing for churches to believe in Revivals ; to look for, pray for, and arrange for them. They are necessary for the Church herself, and especially in helping her to fulfil her mission towards those without her pale. It is a fact that a large percentage of people living in a given neighbourhood are not definitely Christian, although they are not openly immoral or ungodly. And there is always a number of persons on the fringe of the Church who are still religiously undecided.

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They may not consider themselves quite outside, because they occasionally come to the services, or because their children belong to the Sunday school. Still, they are not Christians in the evangelical sense. Towards these the Church has a distinct responsibility, and, occasionally at least, specific efforts should be made to reach them by a definite evangelistic campaign—street missioning, effective outdoor preaching, house-to-house visitation, and holding in the church's usual meeting-place a series of Revival services.

As to who shall take the lead in them, opinions may differ, but I am personally of the opinion that it should be the minister himself, with such workers as his own people can supply, and this in spite of the fact that all ministers are not gifted alike in this direction. But I believe that more have this gift than are aware of it, and this would be discovered if they would only attempt to use it; for it does not follow that, because their gift is teaching they cannot evangelize as well. A man who is a capable minister in other respects has the capacity, more or less effective, of leading his people to religious decision. Indeed, a Christian minister's first duty is to evangelize, and then to teach; he must first enlist before he can effectively instruct. Christ's first command is to carry the evangel to men, and after the disciple has been won the training follows. Every minister should aim at being his own evangelist. If his mission is not so exciting, its results are likely to be safer and better. There

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are some professional evangelists who may be introduced into a church with safety, but more often the opposite is true, and the eventual effects of their work are nil, if not even mischievous. But, even with the safest and best, there is a danger of the people coming to regard them as something more and better than the regular minister, and of thinking when they retire that the saving work in a church must cease. Such results are undesirable ; therefore, let a minister do his own harvesting, as he has done his own sowing.

Also, on the whole, it is better for each individual church to do its own evangelizing. United Missions have the good effect of bringing Christians of different denominations together, and of showing the outside world that the Church is not divided ; but the net results in converts, so far as they have been tabulated, are lamentably disappointing. And especially must the monster mission be voted a failure. Take the Torrey-Alexander Mission, for instance. Crowds of people attended, but chiefly church-goers, who neglected the small duty in their own church ; for it is easier and more exciting to sing the ' Glory Song ' in a crowd than to work in the Band of Hope, or teach a class of little children. The United Mission in this country of late has been too much Americanized, partaking of the monster show, with the big drum and hustling methods ; for usually, when the whole has been totalled, it has been found that many who have passed through the inquiry-room have been members

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of some Christian Endeavour Society or class-meeting, or such as pass through the inquiry-room of almost every mission. But it is different with the special mission in the individual church. Yet even here there are dangers. I have known churches fed almost exclusively on, and trusting almost entirely for their increase to, special missions, and certainly they have not been the strongest ethically. The convert, too, under these conditions is in danger of relying too implicitly upon the outward form, and of substituting a mechanical act, such as crossing to the communion-rail, or rising for prayer, for a spiritual step, and so of becoming a *Sacramentalist*—attributing spiritual effects to physical causes—although he might be kneeling at a Methodist penitent-form. Yet, in spite of the dangers and miscarriages, for the sake of those within the Church, and those without who will not come inside in the ordinary way, the Revival Mission is at present a necessity and may be one means of helping forward the Kingdom.

I. As to when and how often such meetings should be held, precise rules cannot be laid down. But there should be as much spontaneity and as little of the mechanical in the arrangement as possible. There are churches, no matter what their condition, which will have such services planned at a certain time every year. The officials say, 'We always have a fortnight's meetings in November,' as if the Holy Ghost noticed the calendar, forgetting that 'the wind bloweth where it listeth.' You cannot have Revivals according to the time-table. Some-

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thing' freer and more spontaneous should mark their inception—some movement 'in the tops of the mulberry-trees'; some stray conversion; some godly soul bringing a request for such services to be held; a strong yearning in the pastor's breast; or an intuition, as if God were speaking in his heart, that the set time to favour Zion had come. Services arranged under such conditions are the most likely to be effective.

2. Such services, if they are to be fruitful, should take place in a church where there exists a suitable spiritual atmosphere. There must be an interest, a warmth, an intensity, which will make the church a spiritual incubator; a nest over which the Heavenly Dove may warmly and creatively brood. If this atmosphere be absent, if everything be cold and lifeless, then all efforts will be abortive. The preacher may toil hard, he may set moving all the accustomed machinery, but there will be nothing done. Unless by preparatory sermons, prayer, and spiritual expectation, a suitable environment be created, the minister had better keep the ordinary services going, and save his strength.

3. Then the leader of a mission must select suitable themes; there should be a general unity in aim, but a diversity of application. The course should not include addresses to the church, as these belong to the preparatory stage. But no class of undecided hearer should be omitted. Appeals must be made to the young, middle-aged, and the old; to the indifferent, the halting, the doubting, the backsliding;

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each in turn appealed to, and urged to 'come over the line.'

4. Again, opportunity must be given for open and public confession. Indeed, this opportunity should not be reserved for special missions, but should frequently be a feature of the ordinary Sunday evening prayer-meeting. Not, perhaps, a regular practice, lest it become perfunctory, but as often as the tone of a meeting and the spiritual perceptions of the minister make it appear likely that good results will follow. It is therefore important for a minister to give attention to the conduct of such a meeting, for it is in Methodism an integral part of a Sunday evening service. The success of such a meeting often depends upon the way it is led ; and this is the secret reason why some ministers have generally good after-meetings, while those of others are usually heavy and lifeless. Much depends, I know, upon the possession of a magnetic personality, but much also upon method ; and this is a matter of observation and acquirement. But to return. See, especially in a mission, that there is an opportunity for open declaration, either by coming to the penitent-form, or into the vestry, or in some other suitable way. But, while a measure of argument and persuasion is allowable, all undue pressure should be avoided, and certainly all guile and trickery, as, e.g., when a minister asks all who are already Christians to rise and remain standing, and then asks those who wish to become Christians to rise with them, leaving the few who remain sitting

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embarrassed, and in a false position, for they may have good reasons for their hesitation. In dealing with a congregation on such a real and important subject as religion, there should be the utmost candour and simplicity. Of the Master we are urging men to serve, it is said, 'And there was no guile found in His mouth.'

A minister needs to know how to deal with penitents directly and singly, for he will not only be called upon to do this personally, but will also have to instruct others. As human nature varies, penitents need dealing with in widely different ways according to character, temperament, and circumstances. One will need his sorrow for sin deepening; another requires to be drawn away from his sin; some will be so beset with doubts as to indicate a condition bordering on melancholia—a case where the doctor is needed more than the minister; while others stumble at the threshold because they are waiting for some special, perhaps material, token of divine favour. But in all cases let the conversations be short, quiet, simple, definite. Refuse to enter into argument, for it usually ends in an intellectual quibble; but try to lead the seeker out from himself and his pet theories away to Jesus. Of course, pray with and for him, and, whenever possible, get him to pray for himself. The prayer will be a revelation. In *The Man from Glengarry*, by Ralph Connor, the minister's wife (Mrs. Murray) is saying the Lord's Prayer, in which a burly, fighting Scotsman is joining. She noticed that he halted at the sentence 'Forgive us our debts

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as we forgive, &c.,’ and she at once knew where the weak spot lay, for he was cherishing a revengeful spirit towards an old foe, and also knew where to begin her treatment. Whatever reveals the soul of the penitent is a valuable opportunity, and an open door inviting the ‘cure of souls’ to enter.

5. Then the success of a mission will be increased by visiting at home those upon whom impressions have been made. Some people, although genuine seekers, are so retiring and reticent that it is practically impossible to induce them to come forward publicly. These may be helped to decision by a personal visit from the minister or some person in his name. The Revival Mission has hitherto been one of the finest feeders of the Church, and is still of great value when judiciously and enthusiastically carried out.

III. But it is by no means the only method. Augmentation may take place by bringing people under the gospel message through popular or ‘People’s Services.’ Outsiders will frequently be attracted into the church building in this way who would never think of attending the ordinary service. Yet the only difference on this occasion—say once a month—is that the pew-holders relinquish their claim, making their sittings open and free, the singing is more in quantity and brighter than usual, and the address is a sermon without a head, or tail, or text. And such changes and concessions can be made without rendering the service sensational or lowering its tone in any way. By some

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such method the 'man in the street' becomes familiar with a most unfamiliar place, and is induced by-and-by to take a further step towards a Christian life.

IV. Then I have known great good come out of what has been called, for want of a better term, a 'Button-hole Brigade,' i.e. a band of men and women pledged to speak to single persons, in the first instance with the purpose of inducing them to attend a place of worship, and later in order to lead them into a Christian life. This, by comparison with some others, may seem a slow method of increasing the church, but there is no surer one. Indeed, it is a very business-like method. How does a trading house increase its custom? Not chiefly by circulars, advertisements, and show-rooms, but by sending its representative to exhibit the goods it has to sell, and to speak personally to the buyer. The Church has discovered no better method than sending out its disciples by two and two to speak face to face with those who are out of the way, and a few minutes spent in this way will yield better results than an address to the people in bulk.

The Church in the first century increased its disciples in this very way, and the preaching of the gospel in those early years was more by personal testimony than platform oratory. We read that Andrew found Simon and brought him to Jesus, and that Philip told the guileless Nathanael of the new Messiah; and it would be well for every church to have established in its midst an 'Andrew and Philip Society'—in other words, a Button-hole Brigade—whose object

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shall be face-to-face talk about Jesus. The late Dr. Cuyler gives the following testimony: 'One method of systematic effort for the conversion of souls we have found very useful. It has been to invite the officers of the church and Sunday-school superintendent to meet me in the study. We have then gone over the list of unconverted persons in the congregation, discussed their several cases, and assigned to such persons as were ready to undertake it the duty of calling upon or writing an affectionate letter to such persons as they would select.' This needs to be done with much care and prayer, but it is one of those audacious things that might occasionally be attempted on this side of the Atlantic. The borderland people are the problem as they are often the weakness of a church. They have again and again resisted all appeals through the ordinary preaching and missions. They come to the services; they are with us, yet not of us. The question arises, Have we ever tried to reach such by the personal method?

V. Then attention must be given to the conservation of membership. Some ministers are apt in adding members, but poor at keeping them, and a church cannot grow unless it keeps as well as makes.

1. The initiation of members into the church-fold and fellowship should have consideration. Admission should be made much of, for if it be little thought of by the church it will be the same with the candidate. It is a law of life that whatever

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comes easily goes easily, and applies as much to church development as to character and money. I know a minister who sets aside an hour every week to receive into the church any who may wish to join it and to live a Christian life; an entrance all too easy and private. This should take place on some public occasion, and should form the central part of a simple and serious service, which would help to give stability to the religious life of the candidate. Not only should he be passively present at such a meeting, but should take some part in it himself; at least, should be expected to answer certain questions, as for example: 'Have you repented of sin?' 'Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour?' 'Are you willing to make Him your Example and to try to copy His life?' If the answers are satisfactory, a few words of instruction and welcome should follow. Such a service will do much to establish young Christians, and to make them loyal to the church into which they are entering, and not merely attached to the minister. And this is what a pastor should aim at, for 'ministers come and go, but the Church abides.'

2. It goes without saying that visitation—of which more later—is a fruitful conservator. The minister need not do all the work, but should call in all the assistance available. It will be an advantage to have printed cards with a blank line for the name of the new recruit, one of which may be sent by post to an older member living near, asking him or her to call upon the person mentioned. This

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will not only make the older one more interested in the new comer, but will make the latter feel that joining the church increases the number of one's friends.

3. Again, members cannot be conserved unless they unite in church fellowship through the public and private means of grace, and they are all the more likely to become stable by taking part in them, giving an experience in the class-meeting, and praying in the prayer-meeting. Hence the value of cottage prayer-meetings for young converts. They supply a closer, warmer, freer atmosphere. The Christian Endeavour should meet this need, but here, as elsewhere, the exercising is too often left to the few.

4. *Then, lastly*, they must be started to do some useful work as soon as possible. Many, of course, will do but little; but for their own sake, even if the work itself is not much advanced, they must be enlisted. The little girl will come up to her mother who is very busy asking if she can help her, and the mother consents, not because the task is made lighter, but to please and develop the child and keep it out of mischief. It may, indeed, hinder the mother, but it is the making of the child. For the sake of the children of the Kingdom the fathers and mothers in Israel must call out their energies. The object of the minister should be to find a place in the vineyard for everybody. We sometimes think that it would be a good thing to have a selected band of workers tested and tried like

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Gideon's army, and that the weak, the faint-hearted, the easy-going, the unskilled, should be set on one side. But in the Church there are all kinds of people, and all of them need saving. The only way of doing this is to give them some work to do, and the only way to secure a working church is to get each individual member pledged to enter into some definite service, and to do some specific bit of work.

'No unemployed members' should be the motto of every church. By diligence, by patience, by persistence, the expectation should be established that every person coming into the church should find, at once, some post of service. Every candidate presenting himself for admission to the church should be requested to assign himself, at once, to some department of church work ; and in this assignment let there be no exclusion of the women, for they have proved, and are proving to-day, to be the bulwark of the Church, and are amongst its best and most faithful servants. Let woman have her place either as teacher or visitor or even as preacher. Do not be afraid to let her lead where she shows the capacity ; but, on the other hand, give her the opportunity to enter into the more self-sacrificing fields where she shines the brightest. I have known young women go into poor homes and mind the children for the mother, who is thus enabled to go and see a friend or attend the house of prayer.

XIV

The Week-day Service

WHILE the Sabbath is the Church's field-day, the day most opportune for Christian worship and work, the week-day service has demands and opportunities of its own, and neither the church nor the minister can afford to neglect it. Its value is more appreciated than it was twenty-five years ago, when frequently the church premises were closed from Sunday to Sunday. By week-day services is meant, not meetings for business, entertainment, or intellectual development, but distinctly religious services. There is, no doubt, a tendency to neglect such gatherings, and to crowd them out by social or semi-social meetings; but it will be a calamity to the Church as a spiritual force if this tendency becomes extreme. The religious life can be fed privately, but there is a peculiar advantage resulting from social worship that is absent from secret devotions. We recognize this in relation to Sabbath services. It is not less true of those held in the week.

I. Every church should aim to establish a strong and well-attended week-day service, which all the members of the church should be encouraged and

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pressed to attend, and which should be made a real religious force ; and into such a meeting the minister will do well to put his strength. Of course, in addition, there will be sectional meetings—meetings for the young, for men, for women ; but these cannot suffice, nor take the place of the one general mid-week meeting where *all* the members may meet and hold fellowship. While having in it the spirit of Sabbath worship, it also differs from it. It is a mistake to make it a copy of the Sunday service, for the conditions are different. As Dr. Dykes says :¹ ‘Every Lord’s-day is a weekly festival. The congregation is then present, as it were, in state, in unity and completeness, and it is fitting that the form should conform to this idea. So the week-day service should have a note of its own—it should be simpler and altogether freer in character.’ There are, however, three elements necessary to such a service if the ideal is to be approached—exhortation, testimony, prayer. Such a combination meets the demands of religious experience and repeats the practice of the Early Church when that church was at its best and most completely charged with the divine life.

1. There needs to be exhortation, based upon a passage or incident in God’s Word—some point of duty or of self-sacrifice ; some hidden danger, or service forgotten—not a sermon, but a talk upon some theme about which the people’s thoughts can concentrate and prayers gather.

¹ *The Minister and his Duties*, p. 176.

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2. Experience, or testimony ought not to be absent. Witnessing was one of the practices and duties of early Christians, testifying to the world and to each other of the things of Christ. No meeting for Christian fellowship is complete without this element.

3. Prayer also must have a place—i.e. not only silent and secret prayer, but vocal and public also. If we desire to revive the practice of the Early Church, and the practice of the Church in her best periods since, these elements must be present in a smaller or larger degree, and it will pay a minister to make it one of the main features of his church life.

But while such a service is primarily religious, it also may be advantageously used for social intercourse; and a quarter of an hour at the close spent in hand-shaking, and in an interchange of thought and inquiry, would not only give mutual pleasure to those present, but do much to cement a church together. The minister should be the guiding spirit of this gathering, as of the earlier one, moving about amongst the people, encouraging the shy ones, smoothing the irritable, cheering the lonely ones, speaking first to those whom he does not know, and then to those he knows least, leaving his particular friends until the last, or out altogether. A thing he certainly must not do is to take his seat in some corner, gather around him a little coterie of personal friends, and give them his whole attention. The minister may also occasionally use such a gathering

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for still more practical purposes ; say, for a short conference on some phase of church work, not so much with the idea of formulating and starting a new scheme, as to create interest in subjects vital to the church—such subjects as Home and Foreign Missions, the condition of the poor in the locality, the claims of their non-churchgoing neighbours. There will be needed some skill in the management of such gatherings, so that there may be no paralyzing pauses, nor a monopolizing of time by one or two speakers. If the leader be a judicious man he will say little himself, but will use his talent in inducing others to speak, by asking questions and by throwing out hints that will challenge replies. Where a church combines in its mid-week service the religious, the social, and occasionally the practical elements, it has in its midst not only a sign but a pledge of success.

II. But in addition to such a meeting, or, instead of it, I am afraid, in many instances, the church may have sectional gatherings of various kinds. These, also, the minister, even though he cannot always be present, must inspire and guide.

1. In Methodism one of the most important of these is the Class-meeting. Much is being said about the decline of this meeting, and it is a fact that it is not so popular as it once was. It is not for me now to enter into the reasons for this, but experience has amply justified its existence. It, no doubt, has its dangers, and at certain points is open to criticism.

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The charge that it is a kind of Confessional has little in it, for the essential point in Roman and Anglican Confession—its sacerdotal, private, and secret character—is absent from the class-meeting. If sins are really confessed, which is all too seldom, it is in the sense of the Scriptural injunction, ‘Confess your faults one to another.’ There is but little danger in this direction, for people are more likely to cover up their weaknesses than to confess them. And here arises one of the *real* dangers, viz. simulation—simulating a fault that is not truly realized, confessing a sin that is only half the truth, and so is wholly false, and laying claim to a virtue that exists more in imagination than in fact. Frequently it is a misnomer to call what is spoken an ‘experience.’ The man has been immersed in business all the week and all the day, and has hardly had time to say his prayers, yet, because something *must* be said, talks freely about the deep things of the religious life. He has not experienced them; they have not been in his thoughts. Such a practice is not helpful but damaging to the better nature of the man, developing insincerity rather than reality. Still, while there is this danger, which needs to be closely watched, there are hundreds who attend this meeting who are sincere, truthful, genuine Christians. It progress has been made in the spiritual life, if there is a real experience to relate, the relation of it does both the speaker and those who listen much good. But the experience that most helps others is that which tells of battles fought and of victories won—

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battles with doubt, fear, passions, and of how the conquest was gained ; the experience, also, that tells of religious truth verified, of pride slain, of temptation conquered. This is the kind of testimony that is ever welcome and always useful. Of such it can be said, ' We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.'

The minister nowadays, in most circuits, has a class of his own of which he becomes leader, therefore he should know something about the best methods of conducting it. It frequently happens that he has had no first-hand knowledge. Having had little experience, he needs all the more perfect theory. I do not intend to enter into details as to methods, or to discuss the points in a good class-leader, but suffice it to say : (1) He should be a fairly free talker, and should cultivate the habit of spontaneous speech. (2) He should have a mind well stored with facts from the lives of good men and women, with Bible incidents and apt Bible passages. (3) He should be versatile, able to introduce *variety* into a meeting, and not severely bound to any particular method. (4) It will be a great help if he is able to call up and start a number of suitable hymns and tunes. (5) And in all he does, there should be brightness, vivacity, spontaneity. He should avoid *preaching* to his members, but rather use the conversational form of address.

But the minister will have more often still to find leaders than to do the work himself ; and he needs to keep his eyes always open, and be on the

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look-out for such. The ideal leader is hard to discover, for he is a man specifically made up. It is far easier to make preachers than leaders, and it does not at all follow that because a man is efficient in the pulpit he will make a good leader. The man usually best qualified for this task is not the person most highly endowed intellectually or aesthetically, but he who, having good common sense, is at once hopeful, hearty, sincere, tactful, spiritually minded ; and moreover, free from over-much nervousness, and so freeing his members from nervousness, making them to feel at home. Such a man will shake hands with his members as they gather, will conduct the class with the minimum of formality, will not care whether those present speak sitting or standing, and will not make those feel uneasy who are disinclined to speak. Such a free and unconventional man will probably occasionally become a catechist, and will put queries to his members such as, 'What are your habits in regard to private prayer?' 'How about family prayer?' 'What is your method of reading the Bible?' 'In what sphere of Christian work are you specifically engaged?' Nor is there much risk of offence if the members know and have confidence in their leader. As the class-leader is a kind of co-pastor in our Church, heed must be given to his selection ; and the minister, seeing that the class-meeting is an integral part of his church, is bound to develop this form of the week-night service, and it will pay him to do so.

2. Another sectional week-night meeting is one

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where members meet together for prayer. This differs from the mid-week meeting which combines several elements, inasmuch as its one object is prayer. The advantage of social prayer, both to the individual and to the church, cannot be overestimated. It has been argued that because Christ made private prayer primary, and inculcated it, and also because He condemned the Pharisees for praying at the corner of the streets, He deprecates social prayer. But to do so is to misread His meaning. It was the hypocritical spirit in the Pharisees, and the ostentation with which they prayed, that He condemned; and the fact that men are required not to neglect private prayer does not mean that all other kinds are *taboo*. Was He not anxious to have three of His disciples with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane while He prayed, and did He not teach them to say, 'Our Father who art in heaven'? If it had been His wish to forbid united prayer He would have taught them to say 'My Father.' To have a vigorous meeting with the object of unitedly approaching the All-Father for specific blessing cannot but be a strength to a church and its ministry. Such meetings have fittingly been called 'Aaron and Hur Societies,' because, as these two aides de camp of Moses held up their leader's hands, which act brought defeat on the Amalekites and victory to Israel, so a minister's hands are sustained where there meets regularly a band of men and women for the purpose of praying that success may come to him and his church.

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I have noticed, too, that the Prayer-meeting increases in favour, and is more effective, when it has some definite object before it—when it has some specific theme to hold the attention, and specified object to obtain. Let some member be dangerously ill, some family bereaved, or some crisis impending, and at once the concentration is deepened and fervour intensified. This indicates that the interest of a meeting would generally be quickened by the introduction at the beginning of a definite theme, which would deliver it from that incoherence and aimlessness that are the bane of prayers as well as of sermons. To this end it appears to be a good plan to have specific subjects arranged for given meetings. It would save many a meeting from inanity if it were known beforehand that the subject of prayer would be, say, for the children of the church, or the poor of the church, or Foreign Missions, or for the unsaved of the congregation. Such a method would give definiteness to the prayers and keep the wanderers in leash, and would tend to shorten prayers too; for where people have heaven and earth to roam in, they are apt to be a long while getting back. But while long-drawn-out prayers are an infliction, there is no need to go to the other extreme and confine a prayer to a sentence. ‘Sentence’ prayers are usually poor in influence, without unction; and why a sentence only? There are but few who are unable to put a few sentences together. A prayer can be dry on account of its length, but it does

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not follow that it will be any other because it is short. One difficulty a leader of the prayer-meeting has is that of inducing its members to pray audibly. There is usually much reticence and waiting, which, so far as our Church is concerned, tends to spoil a meeting. To avoid this a leader will have his ingenuity taxed. He will probably find it necessary, until a meeting has got into swing, to call upon one or two to lead, and I have found it helpful, while singing a hymn, to ask privately one or another to pray next ; and, in a particularly free meeting, have whispered to some brother or sister as I have moved about, 'Lead in prayer, please,' and so the meeting has been saved from dragging.

But, above all, there should be sought and fostered the praying spirit, for where this is, there is liberty. A prayer-meeting is often a very tame and formal gathering until its close, when the members gather around the stove or fireplace and begin to talk spontaneously on some spiritual theme. 'This,' as Ward Beecher has said, 'is the true prayer-meeting. The first was the formal, this the real one.'

3. A meeting peculiar to Methodism is the Quarterly Renewal of Tickets, which usually takes place on a week evening, and it is exclusively a minister's task. In early Methodism this was (and in many places is still) a meeting held in every class, but in our own Church the practice more widely prevails of having a united meeting for the purpose. But, whichever plan is adopted, the minister should know how to proceed. The object of such gatherings

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is both spiritual and financial. The class-meeting has not only been the spiritual centre of Methodism, but its financial backbone, and solved from the first the problem of sustaining a separate paid ministry; a particular advantage of the weekly payment being that the pence of the poor could be gathered without any fear of burdening them. But this weekly payment was considerably augmented by the quarterly contribution made when tickets were renewed, when, in addition to the penny, sixpence or a shilling was paid. The minister would take the class-book for this night, call the names, and receive the money. I have used, as you will have noticed, the past tense, for I am afraid both the penny a week and shilling per quarter contribution have fallen out of vogue; and it would be an advantage to the Church financially if our younger ministers would endeavour to revive the practice and give more attention to this service.

The Rev. J. Ritson, editor of the *Aldersgate Magazine*, has recently told how he revived this meeting in Paisley. For a few quarters, until there was no longer any need, he sent out a lithographed letter to each member, calling attention to the need of Christian fellowship and inviting them to attend the meeting, stating that he intended to speak upon some phase of the Church's work from time to time. Each letter was accompanied by an envelope, with the member's name written upon it, into which to place the ticket-money. On the evening of the meeting, each class sat together in different parts

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of the church, so that tickets could be distributed without confusion and delay. By this means the class-money was doubled and never went back to its old level, and a still better result was an intensified spiritual life and quickened activities.

4. A very useful week-day service is the Mothers' Meeting, providing the minister has a wife, Sister of the People, or suitable woman in the church, to place at the head. It is possible to get women into a meeting of this kind who will not attend the ordinary church services, and so help them in many ways. By this means they will grow accustomed to the premises and to persons belonging to the church, and will probably be induced to attend the Sunday services. But, while this is a woman's department, the minister must keep closely in touch with the work. He will be required to start and organize it; for while women are excellent workers, they are not usually born organizers, and frequently lack that initiative called for by new movements. Nor must he be in only at its inception, but occasionally give the address and show his interest in the women by meeting them at the close and getting to know something of them and their families personally. Churches where the minister takes an interest in this kind of work have usually strong weekly meetings, and no branch of church service should be outside his interest and oversight.

5. Then a week-night service might be called by another name—a P.M.E. or P.W.E.—and so, while embodying the usual features of worship, it becomes

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more attractive to larger numbers of people. Such meetings, with a register of attendances, a book-club, and other attachments, will succeed where an ordinary service will fail, especially with the young men and women of the Sunday school and those who stand on the fringe of the Church. When I went to the Higher Ardwick Church I found some twenty people attending the chief week-night service. We at once set about organizing a P.W.E., and at once there was a congregation varying from one to three hundred, and this institution continued the whole of my term. The only difference between that and an ordinary service was the additions already alluded to—a solo, an address instead of a sermon, and a rigid adherence to a time-table. The influence was always helpful, socially, morally, and religiously too. But such a meeting needs to be worked well—a list of good speakers, an active visiting committee, and the presence of a choir. It is work alone that keeps the thing moving. Novelty may run it for a time; but the amount of work put into it alone tells in the long run.

Other forms than those mentioned may suggest themselves to the minister. If he be a versatile man he will not follow in the ruts, but mark out paths for himself. But in one and all he must aim to make the services occurring between Sunday and Sunday morally and spiritually effective.

XV

The Children and the Church

IT is the Christian pastor's duty, as it is his privilege, to take a real interest in the children of his church. I emphasize real, because there is a danger of professionalism here as elsewhere. Nor must it be interest in the children of this or that family, or because it will pay, but an interest in the child as such. It will pay to look after the young ; but a higher motive must prompt our activities. The interest, too, must be broad as well as real, extending into the child's many-sided life—in the church, the school, the street, the home, on week-days as well as on Sundays ; and, in order intelligently and effectively to enter into these, there must be close observation of child-habits and a diligent study of child psychology.

Before a minister can rightly enter into this phase of his work he must settle a point in his theology, and decide upon his attitude toward the child's religious value—in other words, whether he will regard it as an alien, or a child of God ; as belonging to Christ, or to the world. If he concludes that it belongs to Christ and the Church, as he

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assuredly must, then an all-round interest inevitably follows, and there must be commenced as early as possible a graduated yet specific training in the Church's faith and practice. Such a training is involved in the relationship of the Church to the child, and is a correlative of the doctrine and practice of baptism. By baptism a child is recognized from infancy as a member of the Christian organism ; and if this act is to become more than a superstition it must be accompanied by careful instruction in Christian doctrine and life. In the case of adults, this, of course, precedes baptism, but in that of children it follows. Hence, every child a minister baptizes is an additional responsibility upon his own and his church's shoulders, and it is the duty of both to devise such means as will best meet this demand.

I. In a general way this is done in and through the Sunday school. In its present-day form, and as we know it, this institution is of recent origin, but in its essence is as old as the second century, for the Early Church made specific arrangements for the religious nurture of its young. The modern Sunday school, however, strange to say, did not originate in the Church, but was for a while a distinctly outside organization. Its object was not to train children belonging to Christian homes, but to gather together those whose religious education had been neglected. Of course, the movement was worked by Christian people, but the churches as such looked askance at it—a striking illustration

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of the truth that the Kingdom is wider than the Church. But gradually, during the last century and a quarter, the churches have been absorbing the movement, until very few schools now exist unconnected with some church or other. The undenominational Sunday school has become rare, for the Christian Church has come to see that she must care in an organized way for the child ; and so the school is now maintained, officered, and taught by the Church. At the present time there is a falling off in the numbers attending, but there is an increasing desire for, and effort to secure, efficiency in teaching. The feeling is growing, especially amongst ministers, that this is the most important department of Church life.

Such questions as the qualifications of teachers and school management have been debated almost *ad nauseam*. One observation only shall be made. I am definitely of the opinion that it would be a real and all-round advantage for there to be one session per day only. The morning school as at present worked is of little practical value, largely because officers and teachers find a double session too great a tax upon their time and talent. This is no experiment, but has proved advantageous in America and in the Colonies, where Sunday-school method has become a science. As to when such a session should be held would depend upon circumstances. In the United States the school meets after the morning service, in Scotland in the evening ; but there seems no better time

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than on the Sabbath afternoon. Such an arrangement need not prevent children attending the morning church service. If, however, it reduced the numbers at that service it would make for efficiency in other ways. But, whenever held, no talent or culture is too high or too good to devote to this work, for one thing on account of the increasing general intelligence of the children, and because of the new light thrown upon the Teachers' Text-book, and on Christian doctrine generally, through the Higher Criticism of the Bible. Many persons hesitate to become teachers, and others teach haltingly, because of their unsettled views on the Bible and the doctrines of the Faith. This would largely pass away upon wider knowledge.

And here comes in the influence of a man who has had a course of training in these things, as ministers have. Doubt and hesitancy belong to transition periods. It is for the trained minister to bring the doubters into certitude and service. Not that the child should be dosed with either new or old theology, much less regaled with a teacher's doubts; but no child should be deprived of the newer light that has fallen upon sacred things in these later days. For teachers to continue teaching the children views held fifty years ago, and to ignore the findings of modern science and criticism, cannot but lead to disastrous intellectual, and probably to bad religious, results in the years to come. Teachers will need guiding in these matters by the ministers, who will do well to meet them regularly

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in such places and at such times as are convenient, so that they may become acquainted with at least the rudiments of the newer views, and to help their workers in every other possible way.

2. But the children should receive still more specific religious teaching than is given in the ordinary school-class. Of course, both religion and ethics enter into almost every class-lesson, and sometimes strong religious appeals are made; but, speaking broadly, the teaching is general and not definitely religious; the atmosphere is educational rather than spiritual. To fill this gap there needs to be re-established, and especially in the Free Churches, some form of the ancient Catechumenate, in which children were taught, by means of question and answer, moral and religious truth. In the Early Church the Catechumenate was an important institution, and the Catechist regarded as a man of weight and influence. Such teachers dealt very largely with unbaptized adults in the first instance, but gradually the practice of catechizing children grew up. the fourth and fifth centuries catechists were greatly augmented, for, with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, there had been a great rush of young and old into the Church, who had to be trained after baptism instead of before. But after these early centuries the practice declined, both in regard to adults and children; and not until the Reformation, which revived so many good practices, was interest in the child re-awakened. The object of the catechist was, of course, religious, but it was more than

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instruction in the creed of the Church—it aimed at moral and religious education. From the catechist and his methods there has grown up in most churches a catechism, a carefully drawn up and jealously preserved set of questions and answers, which the child is supposed to learn and know by heart. Most of us are acquainted with the catechism of the Anglican Church, or the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church, or the Methodist catechism.

A minister may use one of these, or he may not, but he is bound to see that his children are trained in a definite way, either by himself or by those deputed by him to the task. The failure to do this is at present one of the weaknesses of the Free Churches, and is markedly a fault in our own. We should have far fewer lapses if the practice were attended to. It is a work to which the pastor might well devote a portion of his time. It is an exacting and arduous task, one that brings little present reward, but there is really no more profitable work; and by-and-by he will see gathering around him a spiritual family that will be his joy and stay. He will find that members thus trained will be the most steadfast in his church. Children are not made Christians in a day, or by one great emotional decision, but have to be taught religion and duty as they are taught arithmetic, and happily with results almost as mathematically certain. I plead, then, for a revival of the Catechumenate, for the resuscitation of the Order of Catechists. This

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method with children is the most arresting, interesting, and certain; but the interrogation will need to be made, and the answer elicited, again and again. Suppose you wish to instruct them on the subject of sin. Better than an address is a series of some such questions as the following: 'What is sin?' 'What are some of the results of sin?' 'How can we get rid of sin?' Such a practice is made much of in the Roman Catholic Church, with this result—'once a Catholic always a Catholic.' Some Protestant churches follow the practice with good effect. The Lutheran Church requires that before a child is confirmed he be carefully instructed, and children are made to pass through a course of weekly lessons for two years before they are admitted into the church.

3. In addition, however, to such definite instruction as this, the children can be influenced through the ordinary Means of Grace, and especially through the Sabbath services. The minister should encourage their presence at such, and do something to meet their need. They should, whenever possible, sit in the pew with their parents or friends, because this would tend to orderliness and efficiency, for how can either be obtained when children are massed in some gallery, with only two or three overworked teachers to care for them? Of course, there will be parts of the service they will neither understand nor enjoy, but even these are not without their value; for if they teach the lesson of self-control they have served a good purpose. But there must be something further

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than this; a definite portion of the service should be adapted to their needs.

The Children's Service is being recognized as a part of public worship in the Free Churches. The unfettered character of our services permits this without any breach of decorum—unlike the Anglican Church. This possibility has forced the latter to adopt the plan of gathering the young people in the church building on a Sunday afternoon once a month. It seems, however, a far better plan to have a little service all their own every Sunday morning. But it should be a service, and not merely an address—a service lasting about ten minutes, with hymn, prayer, and sermon. The address should not exceed five or seven minutes for obvious reasons, and should be clear, bright, and simple. It need not be crude because it is simple; for children, like adults, are susceptible to beauty of thought and language, and it is a mistake to think that 'anything' will do for them. They detect also that which is devoid of ideas and false in argument. Let the manner be vivacious, making good use of gesture. Children appreciate teaching that appeals to the eye, and the minister can say much through hands, eyes, and facial muscles. The object, however, must not be merely to interest them, but to impart a bit of real instruction and give a fresh impulse to character. The address, while having ideas, should not be over-weighted with thought, nor should there be a too rapid transition from one idea to another, because the child-mind, while quick to receive impressions,

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is slow in grouping ideas and in connecting thoughts.

The themes suitable for addresses are almost innumerable. Almost any familiar object will supply useful lessons—the watch from your pocket, a flower from the garden, a few seeds from the bin, a leaf from the tree, the water-mark in a sheet of paper. Bible stories contain most interesting matter, so do heathen myths, facts of science, and the life-stories of brave and good men and women. But there is one class of address that is not suitable for such a service—the catechetical. The time is too short, the children are too shy to answer, and such a method interferes too much with the decorum of the service. It is necessary to prepare for the children, quite as much so as for adults. They, like the chicks in the farmyard, know wheat from chaff. Also, when illustrations are used, let them be true to fact. I heard a children's address awhile ago on 'The Shepherd and the Sheep.' The speaker said: 'In the East the sheep are led, not driven; and when they are hungry the shepherd leads them to new pastures, and, when thirsty, to fresh fountains, and here he makes them sit down in companies.' You should have seen the disgust on the young faces. 'Pshaw! Why, sheep don't sit down. Just fancy how funny they would look!' All this and more was on their faces. In using a story, do not do too much moralizing. The moral is just what the children do not want and will not listen to. Let the moral be in the story, and let it be so told that it will carry its own message. Nor

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need the children's sermon be a wedge in the service as a whole, but in harmony with it, and, indeed, a bridge leading up to the adult sermon later on.

Speaking to children is very irksome work for some ministers, and frequently such may be heard to say, 'I have no gift.' If this be so, then the sooner one is created the better. The children must be fed, and to induce them to attend a service which provides nothing for them to eat is at once unfair and cruel. In preaching to the children we are in direct Primitive Methodist apostolic succession, for Hugh Bourne always took care that the children had a sermon at his camp-meetings.

4. Another way of caring for the children is to encourage the Home Service. It is the minister's duty to urge its necessity from the pulpit. There has been a decline in late years of home religion; and whoever is able to resuscitate this, and raise afresh the broken-down altar of family prayer, will do a great service to the home and the church, and will make much easier the entry and retention of the children. And when the minister has the opportunity of praying in the home, let him not forget the young people, and mention them, not as a whole only, but one by one.

5. This suggests the duty of taking, at all times, a personal interest in them. Get to know as many of your children by name as possible, and be at some pains to remember their names. Children like to be called by their Christian name. They do not like 'Well, my boy,' or, 'Well, my little girl, how

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are you ? ' It is all too vague and impersonal. They like the concrete Mary, John, William. Anonymity is as much disliked by the children as by adults. ' Good afternoon, Mr. ———, how are you to-day ? ' When we are addressed in this blank way we conclude that we have made little impression upon the person addressing us, and that we occupy a very remote corner in his thoughts. Let the minister be approachable to the children, nor think it is time wasted to speak to them and with them, and be willing to enter into their world of ideas, and to identify himself for the time being with their hopes and interests.

6. A very important modern way of helping the children is through the Band of Hope. The establishment of a good Band of Hope in a church is a great help as well as a good in itself, for it is a fact proved by a wide collection of statistics that more scholars of the school join the church where such an institution flourishes than where it does not exist. The fact that temperance is taught in connexion with almost all our young people's meetings makes the need for a separate temperance meeting less. Nevertheless the Band of Hope is still a necessity, if for no other purpose than for reaching the outside boys and girls. But there is one thing a pastor must strongly insist upon, which is, that the meetings of such a Society are used not merely for entertainment, but for the impartation of distinct temperance teaching.

7. The Junior Christian Endeavour Society is a

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comparatively recent development, and has largely taken the place of Catechumen-classes. It is very successful where there are good and wise leaders, but there is just the danger of thinking that children can instruct each other, whereas they are learners and not teachers yet ; and great care must be exercised lest the religious life be unduly forced, and so become unnatural. The weakness of the C.E., as a meeting for children, is that it usually lacks the direct teaching which children so much need, and that the catechetical method is very seldom adopted. The minister will need to impress the need for constant and patient instruction upon those whom he puts at the head of his Junior C.E.

8. Then a Sunday evening service for children is a necessity where large Sunday-schools exist, especially in thickly populated districts. Many children have but poor oversight in their homes, and are allowed to run the streets on Sunday evenings if they are not gathered together in this way. On cold winter evenings many of them crowd into the chapels for the sake of warmth, and are often difficult to control, and so are hardly ever welcome. But they should be welcomed somewhere, and this is best done by holding a service specifically for them in the schoolroom. This will entail some self-sacrifice on the part of a few workers, and will deprive them of, at least, part of the ordinary service, but, by beginning half an hour earlier, the sermon at least can be heard.

9. The relation of the child to the Sacrament of

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the Lord's Supper has sometimes caused the minister some difficulty. While a child known to be good should not be debarred if it presented itself, still children should not be encouraged to attend before fourteen or sixteen years of age. By thus holding them back, a greater regard is felt for the service, and a boy's or girl's first sacrament is usually a great religious experience. Still, on the other hand, they should be encouraged to attend the ordinance as witnesses, so that a desire to partake may be created. In the Jewish home the Passover, with all its symbols, was eaten in the presence of the children, who were led to ask, 'What mean ye by this service?' and were told that it commemorated the passing of the Destroying Angel over the homes of Israel. So the children, observing the symbols of our Lord's death, are led to inquire into its meaning. In Puritan times, and long after, many persons remained to the ordinance who did not communicate, and John Wesley encouraged the presence of the children, as do many Anglican clergymen to-day. Inviting them to remain to this ordinance is one way of training them and preparing them for the Church and of leading them into the experiences of the Christian life. Child-nature is very rich soil, and no part of the church vineyard will yield so abundant a harvest. We toil here with a hope that never grows dim and with a faith that does not falter.

XVI

The Church and Social Service

IT is imperative that the minister give attention to the social side of the gospel as well as to the spiritual, not only because the time-spirit demands it, but because social service is really part of the Christian evangel; it is one of the foci of the ellipse (the other being personal salvation) in which the Christian religion moves. Without this the church may be built up, but not the kingdom of God brought in. The minister's interest, of course, in social problems will be primarily religious and not either academic or political; his attention will be given mainly to social facts at that point where they impinge upon the spiritual life, and where they affect moral character. His message in the first instance will be personal and spiritual; this it will ever be, and cannot be other, if he remains faithful to his calling, but it will also be a message tinged and haloed with a distinctly social colour. For just as wealth is becoming socialized, so also is Christian truth; and neither wealth nor truth is destroyed by this process, but each bears a new aspect and is baptized with a new meaning. By

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presenting a social gospel, we are by no means untrue to our calling, nor to the gospel itself, for we represent a faith that, while remaining the same in essence, is able to adapt itself to each new age. No two eras demand truth in precisely the same form, and the method of presentation in the nineteenth century will not meet the requirements of the twentieth. Three things, at least, are demanded by the present age from the pulpit.

1. It must meet the religious indifference of the time. This is a mark of the age ; it is not so much scepticism as heedlessness which is the present obstacle to faith.

2. It also must meet the demand for a reasoned faith. The scientific spirit which dominates modern civilization, recognizing well-attested facts only, has to be remembered by the exponent of religion.

3. Then, again, the age is altruistic, communal. The eyes of the leaders of thought are upon society rather than upon the individual, or upon the individual as a part of the whole. Much attention is being given to the problem as to how far, and in what ways, the single person is made or marred by his environment. The preacher cannot ignore this spirit ; he must study it, seek to understand it, bring himself into sympathy with it, and must saturate his message in it. He must also do something to mould and guide it and keep it from drifting into anti-Christian channels. His sermons must have an altruistic flavour. This does not mean that he must preach political socialism or

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advocate a collectivist form of government ; he must distinguish between social ideals, or the socialist spirit, and socialism as an economic theory. But while avoiding this danger, he is bound to do all that in him lies to bring in the kingdom of God, which is both a social and spiritual millennium, as well as to build up the Christian Church.

But the Christian minister is permitted to do more than pervade his sermons and general teaching with the social spirit ; he may, probably he will, feel that he *must* do what he can on the platform to further great social causes and directly advocate some specific method of altering the social condition of the people. I will not discuss the vexed question of the 'political parson,' except to express a personal opinion. While fully believing that the platform is open to the minister, and that he can do much good by lecture and address upon vital social questions, at the same time it is questionable if he does not lessen his influence when he too closely allies himself with any one political party. To say nothing of hurting members of his church, he will usually better further his aims by putting in a word as he visits his flock than by taking the political platform. Of course if great moral issues are at stake, such as the drink problem, gambling, injustice to the poor, he is compelled to come forth and ally himself with that party in the State which will best and most quickly bring in better conditions. But he should be just as ready to put aside his predilections, and join

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another and different party, if moral and spiritual ends demand it.

By thus assisting through imperial or civic politics to break social bonds and to create a better social environment, he is helping forward his own specific work, since it is almost impossible for a man to be good, certainly he cannot be his best, while living in degrading surroundings. There need be no controversy as to which is a minister's first duty, saving the individual or regenerating society. He must seek to do both. Suitable bodily conditions are helpful, if not absolutely necessary, to the saving of the soul, and a minister will have a better chance with the latter if the former are helpful. It is difficult to dispense the bread from heaven where the bread of earth is insufficient. Hence a minister cannot but be interested in such problems as the land question, wages, employment, &c. It is said, 'Your duty as ministers is the cure of souls.' 'Yes, but to enable us to do this men must be put in such surroundings as will permit them to grow a soul.' Saving men is not something done by one strategic stroke, or emotional decision, but is done by bringing to bear upon them saving influences of all kinds, social as well as spiritual. Consequently everything that helps humanity should have the sympathy of the church and the assistance of the minister. Being what he is, he cannot but interest himself in all humanitarian projects and ameliorative, curative, and preventive institutions, for they are essentially Christian. The orphanage should have in

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him a pleader, the hospital an advocate, the asylum and almshouse a sympathizer. And this largely because such institutions are mainly established and maintained in the interests of the poor, who are the especial charge of the Christian Church. Its Founder was poor, and declared that His mission was to preach the gospel to the poor. The first disciples were poor, but nevertheless had a poor's fund, as had the apostolic community, and for centuries the only systematic relief of the poor came from the gifts of the Church ; State care for the poor is of comparatively recent origin. But organizations of various kinds for charitable purposes have been in existence for centuries. How numerous and extensive these are, few people are aware. In London alone there are nearly three thousand separate charitable organizations—for the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the inebriate, the infirm, the sick, the incurable, &c.,—which dispense some £7,000,000 per year in a hundred different ways. In addition to such societies, almost every church, not only in the metropolis, but in the land, has charities out of which its poor are helped. Besides the fund from which their own needy poor are helped, many churches have at their disposal a more general charity ; and when this is the case, and indeed when it is not, the minister will find it a great advantage to unite his church with the 'Charity Organization Society,' and to put his funds into its hands. In most large towns there is now established a branch of this society, with a paid

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agent, whose duty it is to visit and investigate cases applying for relief. Every minister in addition to his own poor has many an outside application for relief, more or less genuine, and it is a real advantage to be able to hand such cases over to the Organization agent, who will inquire into and help every real case of need.

But our duty to the poor does not end here ; we must give our sympathy to all movements which tend to lessen poverty, which are aiming to remove its causes, and which are seeking to make the poor superior to their circumstances. These movements are many, but chief among them is the abolition of the drink evil. Even those who contend that poverty is the cause of drinking will admit it to be tragically true that drink causes much poverty. For this reason, and for many others, the Christian minister must not only be an abstainer, but a sworn enemy of the drink, and willing, in season and out, to deal it a blow, willing to become 'Rechabite,' 'Good Templar,' 'Blue Ribboner,' 'White Ribboner,' or even 'Carry Nationist,' if he can do a little to smite the foe. If there is no such society in his church, let him start one at once—of men, women, and children who will pledge themselves neither to use, make, nor buy intoxicating liquors, and to have little to do with any shop where it is sold. The drink question must be made the Church's own, and no Christian minister can rest until this great social problem is solved.

We have up to this point spoken in a general

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way ; but a minister needs to bring his social ideals into definite activities and into practical shape in his church. By all means let him study the problems, and perhaps use the platform, and occasionally the pulpit, for the advocacy of remedial measures ; but something more may, and in some cases must, be done. In the church itself there may be established such organizations which, while not directly religious, will nevertheless make for the betterment of men and women. Very few churches, at least in populous districts, should be without some kind of social work attached to them, although only a few may be able to organize on 'institutional' lines. The Institutional church is as yet in its infancy, and is still on its trial, and the question as to how far the model on which it is being built is admissible is not yet out of the realm of discussion. There are many who object to it on the ground that it introduces 'secular methods' into spiritual work, and consequently reduces the church's influence as a spiritual organism. They admit that it is frequently popular, and has attracted the non-church-going class, but are sceptical as to abiding spiritual and moral results. As to the first objection, the present age regards as fallacious the distinction between secular and sacred—nothing is secular that really helps humanity, and nothing is sacred that does not. The latter objection can only be answered by an appeal to facts, and these so far as ascertained are in favour of such organizations. Take, for example, the Manchester Wesleyan Mission, or 'Whitefield's' in London. Here the preaching is

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as fervent and faithful, and the church at the heart of the missions as intense, as where no social work is being done. Of course, in such churches there will be a larger proportion on the fringe of church membership than in ordinary cases; but if these are in the process of salvation, as many are, the further step may be at any time expected. Dr. Washington Gladden, in his *Christian Pastor*, gives an account of a church in Boston which, by working on institutional lines, in seven years rose from 300 to over 1,000 members—an experience that can be paralleled in at least a few instances in this country.

This class of work, however, is only possible under suitable conditions. It is not needed in sparsely populated districts, nor can it be done where a church is weak. But where the workers are fairly numerous and the buildings suitable, and especially if they are situated in populous localities, such work will not only succeed, but becomes a necessity. There is growing evidence that the purely religious mission-hall in slum districts is a failure, but that the churches combining social and religious work are succeeding. The Salvation Army is proof of this on a large scale, while the central Wesleyan missions, and the Primitive Methodist Whitechapel Mission, are evidence of it on a smaller scale. In both cases chapels and buildings empty under the old order are now full, and religious as well as social interests are thriving. The class of work attempted by the institutional church, as

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distinct from the directly spiritual, falls naturally under three heads—educational, recreative, and serviceful.

1. Under the first head must be placed all forms of instruction. In places where the municipality does not provide classes for teaching the different arts and sciences, such might be started on church premises. So might classes for teaching domestic subjects—the girls being taught cooking or dress-making, the youths some handicraft that will be a useful hobby through life. More directly mental training will come through the establishment of a 'literary society,' the furnishing of a reading-room and the formation of a library.

2. But provision must be made for pure recreation which shall be a distinct change from ordinary occupations. A gymnasium in winter will not only take youths from the street corners and out of the public-houses, but will help to develop healthy bodies. A large sum of money is not required to begin; a start may be made with simple and inexpensive apparatus. Then a room for quiet games is a necessity which will need closely watching lest gambling be introduced. But youths following sedentary occupations should not be encouraged to spend too much time indoors. Far better for them to be out in the open air, walking, footballing, scouting, or playing at harriers, &c. In summer time clubs—cricket, tennis, cycling, &c.—may be organized, for the less time spent indoors the better. Of course all this kind of thing will need to be

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carefully supervised and kept within given bounds. The minister should be the guiding spirit of this department, as of all others in his church. He will need carefully-drawn-up rules forbidding all conduct unbecoming to a Christian organization—all rude behaviour, profanity, betting, &c.—and which will foster a forbearing, kindly, gentle spirit. Compelling men and women to act in this way for an hour or two every day will tell its tale for good upon the roughest and the worst.

3. But a church has not justified its existence socially when it provides for the education and recreation of its adherents. This may be done very perfectly and admirably, without manifesting the essential Christian spirit. The institutional church must justify its claims by going outside itself into the great world of pain, sin, and need, and must seek to relieve the suffering and rescue the fallen. This can be done in a hundred ways—visiting the sick, the distressed, the criminal; providing a legal adviser and doctor at a minimum cost, if not altogether free. It is in these departments where the spirit of a true church—the spirit of unselfishness—is manifested. Such a church will, of course, have a thrift department, helping the poor to save up their pence, and so to provide for a ‘rainy day’ and for festive occasions. Hence clubs of many kinds—sick, burial, clothing, grocery, &c.—will be established. An institutional church is just a Christian church with the social element predominating as it predominates in the home, and which, like the home,

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keeps its doors ever open to members of the family who may be still outside.

Many churches have attached to them a semi-social organization known as a Brotherhood, which differs from the earlier P.S.A. inasmuch as its membership is restricted to men, which is in many ways an advantage, for it permits a wider range of addresses and allows a more specific treatment than in a mixed meeting. This exclusion, also, for some reason or other, seems more attractive to the working man, who seems to have the idea that it is effeminate to congregate with his wife and daughters. The Brotherhood also differs from the P.S.A., inasmuch as it aims at doing something by way of helping its members, and does not assemble merely to be entertained; hence the best Brotherhoods have connected with them many agencies for mutual help. If organically attached to a church it is necessary for a minister to keep his hand on the movement lest it become a rival to other agencies. But by tactful handling it may preserve its practical independence and yet become a very helpful adjunct to the church.

Another social organization little understood as yet in Methodism is the Boys' Brigade, which has both a reclamative and preventative object. It had a Scottish origin, and amongst its most enthusiastic supporters was the late Henry Drummond, the most Christly of men. Its object at first was to gather in boys from the streets; but now, in most instances, it has become a part of church, or more precisely of Sunday-school, organization. A

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Brigade¹ consists of from twelve to forty youths between the ages of twelve and twenty-one years, the only condition of membership being attendance at some Sunday school. Members take a pledge not to use tobacco, nor intoxicating drinks, nor to use vulgar, profane, or indecent language. They are required to attend weekly some religious service such as a Bible-class or prayer-meeting, and to meet regularly for military drill. It is this latter exercise which has been, and is, the attraction of the movement, for the British youth dearly loves the habiliments and atmosphere of conflict.

Strong objections have been taken to the movement on this account, and it is thought that it fosters the military spirit. It must be admitted that it has this appearance, but as a matter of fact the exercises are little more than a gymnastic drill, and instead of developing the war spirit the effect is rather to tame, humanize, and control otherwise turbulent natures. The drill is physically a good thing, and the discipline of the brigade, developing habits of obedience, reverence, and self-respect, tends to grow a healthy type of man. Generally the class of boy attracted to such an organization is one which, if left alone, would drift into irreligion, probably into vice, and would most likely become a menace to society. That the use of military symbols does not create a military spirit the Salvation Army, with its general, commissioners, captains,

¹ For a more detailed discussion see Gladden's *Christian Pastor*, pp. 357-9.

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and cadets, is a standing evidence, for no more peace-loving body exists to-day than that founded by General Booth.

There is a social movement, existing chiefly in the Episcopal Church, which is doing good service, and which might partly be incorporated into some of our Free Church activities. I mean the 'White Cross Army.'¹ It was commenced by the late Dr. Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham, and assisted greatly by Miss Ellice Hopkins. It is essentially a purity movement amongst men. Its members pledge themselves to treat women with respect, and to protect them; to put down all indecent language and coarse jests, and to regard the law of purity as equally binding upon men and women. Its watchword is 'Keep thyself pure,' and 'Do all that is possible to help others to do the same.' The committee controlling the movement has done excellent social service in calling attention to indecent play-bills on the advertisement hoardings, in rescuing children from haunts of vice, and in stirring up civic authorities to remove overcrowded and insanitary dwellings. Some such army might be organized in connexion with our brotherhoods, young men's guilds, and institutes. All that is needed is some one to lead, and to point out the way. It is by movements such as these that the new social order will be brought in and the kingdom of heaven come.

If a minister is to be abreast of the time, if he

¹ See Stall's *Church Work*.

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is to' make his church a present-day force, he must turn his attention to these things ; inaugurate them not as expedients more or less worldly, but as activities intrinsically worthy, for unless they are good in themselves the good effect will not be lasting. But the social agencies of a church can be worked as religiously as an ordinary service, and be as sacred in the sight of Heaven as a prayer-meeting.

XVII

The Conduct of Church Business

WHILE the church is primarily a spiritual organism, it has a material side, which is a kind of body holding the soul, and the materialities of the church, like all others, have to follow certain lines; i.e. there are rules belonging alike to church and commercial business. The aims are, of course, different: the one selfish, the other unselfish; the one seeks profits, the other exists to save men. From its inception the church has had a secular side. Judas was treasurer of the apostles' fund, and Stephen and his companions were chosen to control 'tables' in the apostolic church. This was done that the apostles might be free to carry abroad the evangel, an arrangement which has been partially successful only, for in practical work it has been found impossible for the pastor wholly to free himself from the business of the Church; even if he is liberated from its finances there are other forms of church business in which he is compelled to take the lead.

The idea prevails, and not without reason, that a minister is of necessity a poor business man. It

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must be admitted that many of the qualities that go to make an ideal minister—imagination, hope, trust, &c.—are not the qualities for business. Then his training and occupation also take him away from practical matters. Still, while this is the tendency, a minister must seek to cultivate the practical side of his character, for he will find that a knowledge of the laws of business, and some aptitude for finance, will help him in the management of a church, and are absolutely necessary in a circuit superintendent. If a man lacks the ability to acquire them he must be content to remain throughout his life a second or third preacher. A man who takes the control of a church, or of a circuit, must not only take part in church business, but be prepared to be a business leader and guide. By virtue of his position he is placed at the head of affairs, and usually presides over the secularities, as over other parts, of the church. This being the case, it is necessary for him to know beforehand something of the duties awaiting him, and to settle upon certain guiding principles.

1. In the control of business he must cultivate *tact*. The word means 'touch' or 'feeling.' Just as a blind man through his fingers can tell the direction of the strands in a piece of cloth, so a man with tact judges the trend of a meeting, feels his way to a conclusion. Tact is that quick mental touch which apprehends directly the spirit of a meeting, and dictates automatically a leader's action. It is something more than sound judge-

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ment. Judgement is the result of a process of reasoning, so quick, perhaps, as to be apparently without sequence, but every stage is nevertheless present. Tact feels its way to the end, taking note of a score of different circumstances about which there is no time to reason. This, to a large extent, is a quality of personality born with the man, and beyond his power to create. And a man born with dull intuitions, without mental tactility, will never be other than a blunderer in his dealing with his fellows; he will be for ever setting somebody by the ears, and never able to lead. If circumstances thrust him to the front, his leading will be to disaster. But while a man cannot create tact, he may cultivate it. Very few people are without it altogether. It is mostly a question of much or little; most have a base from which to develop more.

Tact may be developed in many ways. First by seeking a better knowledge of ourselves and of the people we are expected to guide. If by such self-study we discover our own capacities and weaknesses, we come to know where to put on the break and when to take it off. Also the better we understand our fellows, the more tactfully and helpfully shall we deal with them. Then also the cultivation of a certain spirit helps the growth of tact; e.g. by fostering a tolerant, kindly spirit towards others there is given to us an insight into their character and a forbearance with their foibles impossible without it. No man can understand his brother

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if he is intolerant, unsympathetic, or lacking in love. Patience, also, assists the growth of tact—the disposition and power to hold words and actions in leash until correct conclusions are formed. A man may have good judgement and keen intuitions; but if he is choleric, hasty in temper, and uncontrolled he will act unwisely or tactlessly. On the other hand, if he masters himself, and becomes patient, he grows in ability to deal wisely with his fellows. It frequently happens that a man lacking by nature in tact gains in ability to control others by becoming good, controlled, and kind.

In a meeting a leader will occasionally need all the tact he can summon. It may have moved on smoothly enough for a time, almost ruling itself, when suddenly, like the storms on the Sea of Galilee, gusts of feeling will raise it into a tumult. It is when this occurs that a leader's power is tested. But if he be tactful he will so manipulate the sails as to prevent the boat capsizing, and bring it safely to shore in spite of wind and wave. Not only will tact prevent a wreck, but it will help people to do what they do not want to do—make them move east when they think they are travelling west. It will get business through expeditiously, and is one of the most marketable commodities of a minister's stock-in-trade.

2. Another quality needed in a leader is *impartiality*. This is very necessary, but difficult to practise. Perhaps a scheme is to be brought forward of vital importance to the church, one in which he as minister

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is deeply interested. There are present those who are opposed to it, as well as others who are in its favour, and there is quite a temptation to give the latter the advantage. This is not only unfair, but impolitic, for the best way to silence the guns of the enemy is to let them discharge themselves as early and as completely as possible. It gives a leader the chance of answering the arguments and of influencing the meeting at the nearest point to the vote. There is also a temptation to give those who can best put his case the advantage. But this must be resisted, for if once a minister gets a name for unfairness, his influence is weakened if not lost. Also, in church business he must discountenance all wire-pulling and back-stair arrangements, or anything that savours of trickery and partiality.

3. The minister in the conduct of business must act *charitably*. He must be disposed to put the best construction possible upon the words and actions of every member of the meeting, attributing pure motives even when good sense is not very conspicuous, never imputing a bad intention where a good one can be found.

4. A minister must administer *frankly*, i.e. he should take a meeting into his confidence, laying his schemes and ideas openly before it, and keeping nothing up his sleeve to be found out from other lips than his own. Of course there will be plans not yet ripe at which he can only hint, when reticence is wisdom ; but, speaking generally, it is

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best to be open and above-board. If he is not so, the people, feeling they have no security, will become hesitant and half-hearted. A meeting soon knows whether its leader is trusting it or not, and its response will be commensurate with his confidence.

5. A leader also must exercise *patience*. Worthless people will try him, but he can afford to give these short shrift; for his church, like Gideon's army, will be all the stronger without them. But *good* people also try the patience. Let these be borne with, and above all let there be perfect self-mastery. If a leader loses control, and his temper gets the upper hand, his cause is lost. If treated badly or if insulted, it is best to appear not to notice it. People seldom regret their silences, but very frequently mourn over their hasty words. Be uniformly courteous, even when courtesy is denied to you. This will win respect and influence, and be an object-lesson to all.

These principles may now be applied in a few directions.

1. *Trustees' Meetings*.—These have to do chiefly with finance, and are by no means unimportant. As soon as a minister enters a circuit, i.e. as its superintendent, it will be well for him to ascertain as completely as possible the condition of the trust estates, the number and character of the trustees, how many are active and how many are merely nominal, and what trusts need enlargement and reconstruction. In a church there will

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frequently be found men doing little work religiously who might do excellent financial service. This is work that should not be despised, for any man who helps to keep a church out of debt is certainly doing Christian service, especially if he infuses into the secular department a Christian spirit. Indeed, such a man may be doing God's service just as truly as he who prays in a prayer-meeting or teaches in a Sunday school. This is the spirit that a minister needs to foster, for, while we require sound business in church matters, we do not want the keen financing of the market; for the church, at least, must show that business can be done on Christian principles. In appointing trust officers especial care needs to be exercised in the selection of the treasurer and secretary. The treasurer should be used to business, and, if possible, successful in it, able to infuse some of that insight, ability, and energy into church matters which have brought him to the front commercially. Certainly a treasurer should be a man with 'means,' to whom the handling of money other than his own will be no temptation. He should, too, be a man above suspicion commercially: one who has a reputation for honesty and right-doing, and not one who has attained success by shady or questionable methods. He should also be a generous man, willing, as well as able, to give a lead in the financial schemes of the church. Quite as important is an energetic secretary with powers of initiative, organizing ability, and persistence, one who will see schemes through

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as well as start them. If a minister can place such a man at the head of his trust, who will be as a driving-wheel to the machinery, he will be saved from much anxiety and liberated for higher work.

It belongs to the trustees to devise ways and means to meet the church's financial responsibilities, and the usual sources of income are the seat-rents. These need careful adjustment and delicate handling. The practice of renting seats may be defended on the ground that a class of persons will attend a place of worship where they pay for a pew who would otherwise be absent. They argue, 'I pay for a sitting, and I may as well use it,' and so they are there. The practice also permits families to sit together, and enables the minister, at a glance, to see who of his flock is present and who absent. But the practice unduly emphasizes the distinction between rich and poor in a place where all are supposed to be equal. It also discourages the attendance of strangers, who naturally feel that they are using something for which they have not paid. It also is out of harmony with the spirit of the gospel, which is full and free, 'without money and without price.' At present, however, owing to financial strain, seat-rents are necessary evils, but one hopes to see the time when they will be abolished. In churches where they are let the trustees must see that a sufficient number of seats are set apart for the poor and strangers; not in the top gallery or darkest corner of the church, but situated here and

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there amongst the rest, so that few people will know which are free and which are appropriated. A practice obtains in some churches of richer members paying for several pews for the poorer members, so that the church revenue may not suffer. The minister, as chairman of the trustees' meeting, must constantly watch the interests of the stranger, the poor, and the friendless, guard the higher interests of the church, and seek to keep out the worldly spirit and all that is contrary to the mind of the Master.

2. Another important meeting in Methodism is the *Leaders' Meeting*, called in some other churches the *Deacons' Meeting*. This court has under its oversight and control chiefly the spiritualities of the church, and should meet oftener than once a quarter, and for deeper purposes than to prepare accounts for the Quarterly Meeting. The chief meeting will, of course, be the one immediately preceding the Quarterly Meeting, when arrangements are made for forthcoming services and the church roll is overhauled. The adjustment of this roll will need to be watched by the minister, for leaders are apt to be very capricious in adding and dropping members. He should see that members are retained until he hears from their own lips that they no longer wish to be attached to the church.

3. The principal business meeting of the circuit, however, is the *Quarterly Board*. It is to the minister's advantage to regard this meeting highly, and he should do all he can to enhance its authority

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and importance, and use his influence to secure a large and regular attendance. The impact of a good and well-attended meeting will be felt in the churches for weeks, and possibly throughout the whole quarter. If there are men in office who habitually neglect to attend, then let him see that they are replaced, as opportunity permits, by those who will pay better attention to duty. As chairman the minister should have his business well in hand, with an agenda carefully prepared, resolutions written out on all formal business, and even when business is debatable a clearly prepared resolution will help the meeting. If such arrangements be neglected the meeting will probably get out of hand, the members become irritable, and precious time be wasted. If the chairman has a scheme he wishes very much to carry, and which is likely to be opposed, he had better put his resolution into other hands. Indeed, it is best for the president of a meeting to do as little talking as possible. His chief duty is to direct the discussion. This he can best do by a few words here and there, which shall serve as points, keeping the debate on the right rails. He must seek to keep the temper of a meeting good, and use a little artifice to do so—a quip, a humorous remark. Even a digression, such as a verse of a hymn or prayer, is permissible, and may turn aside a quarrel and prevent wounded feelings. If a verse is struck up at the psychological moment—‘Together let us sweetly live,’ &c.—by the time it is finished there will be a considerable

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reduction of the temperature. Some ministers are noted for their stormy meetings. As a rule, also, they are noted for their general inefficiency and want of success.

There are three crucial points in a Quarterly Meeting that need careful watching.

(a) The reporting of members. It is well for a minister to look and work for an increase, but he should not make it the all-important thing. His first aim must be to do the real work of a minister, forgetting, for the time being, all about increase or decrease. Some ministers always have a decrease in members during their first year on a circuit. They lay themselves out for a clean sweep of doubtful members, sift the roll mercilessly, knowing that a decrease in their first year is more discreditable to their predecessor than to themselves. It is well, therefore, at first not to be too anxious for either an increase or decrease; certainly it is petty and mean to look for a decrease. It is also well to discourage reporting large increases, especially after a revival, and at the end of the ministerial term; for a minister may be succeeded by one of those brethren I have described who always report a decrease in their first year.

(b) Finance is another crucial point in a Quarterly Meeting, and usually causes more discussion and wrangling than other kinds of business, and precious time needed for more vital subjects is often sadly wasted. Much of this may be avoided by the appointment of a Circuit Finance Committee, at

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which levies can be discussed and settled by the older and wiser members of the Quarterly Board. Usually the findings and allocations of such a committee are accepted by the later and larger meeting.

(c) Another crucial and delicate point is the invitation of ministers.¹ This, for the first two or three years, is more or less formal, so that the minister has no need to vacate the chair. But after the third year (this is only applicable where there is no hard time-limit) he will do well to put the steward in his place, and under certain circumstances will find it best to leave the meeting while his case is discussed. At any rate he should take a quiet, dignified course—a course that will neither blunt his feelings nor wound his self-respect. But a minister will be wise to insist that his invitation be discussed in a full meeting and not by a selected committee, for there is always safety in numbers; a democracy can be better trusted than an oligarchy.

4. There is another meeting of which little use has yet been made in some Methodist churches, and which is capable of great service—I mean the Church Meeting. But it may be used more successfully than it is for many things, and not the least for finance. The Quarterly Meeting Funds come most fittingly under its consideration: the questions, for example, of how many collections shall be taken, and whether a certain offertory method, say the envelope system, shall be adopted; a practice which has solved the money problem of many churches, and might be

¹ I refer here to Primitive Methodism.

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more widely used. It is a system that secures the gifts of every member, small as well as large, tends to check covetousness, and leads to systematic giving. If a meeting commits itself to the principle, a circular should be prepared stating the needs and object of the fund, requesting a weekly contribution according to the giver's means, and asking each person to fill in the amount, with name and address, upon an accompanying slip. Such a circular could be distributed one Sunday evening and collected the next. The names should then be entered into a treasurer's book with the sum promised, and numbered. Envelopes, with the donor's number (not name) upon them, should be then handed out in sufficient number to last, say, three or six months. By this method no one except the treasurer knows the amount promised.

Another branch of finance considered by such a meeting should be the Missionary Revenue. Next to keeping itself out of debt, and paying its minister, a church's interests should be Christian missions. This is too wide a subject to consider here, but it is one no minister or church can neglect ; and it is the minister's duty to stir up his people in this great cause by sermon, address, and example. But before this or any scheme is introduced to a church meeting, it should be well thought out by the ministers and leaders, and presented in a clear and judicious manner to the people.

In conclusion, it is the minister's duty in all the business courts of the church to foster an unworldly

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spirit, and to do his best to develop his officers into something more than mere officials, making them feel that they are not so much the church's rulers as its most responsible workers—keeping before them the Pauline ideal, 'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'

XVIII

Chapel Building and Chapel Debts

THE minister, although primarily interested in spiritualities, will be confronted with the problem of chapel debts and church - building schemes.

I. The building of a new chapel, although supported by a body of trustees, will entail upon a minister thought, perhaps anxiety, and extra labour. The first problem he will have to face will be—Where shall we build? A site is not always a matter of choice, for trustees are frequently compelled to build in a given place. Yet if it is unsuitable it will be better to sell out, even at a sacrifice, and remove elsewhere.

Having fixed the position, the next question is—What kind of structure shall we erect? The answer will depend upon many things—the money in hand, the character of the neighbourhood, the class of people we wish to gather in. A very different building will be required in the city suburb from that in the city slum.

I. It should be *suitable*—suitable to the denomination, to the people building it, and to the kind of

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people it is intended to attract. For Methodist worship, which in its nature is plain and homely, there is nothing better than the Corinthian or square style, with or without a gallery. The Gothic style in most places will be out of harmony with the needs of the case, and too expensive. Not that the structure should be barn-like and ugly, but rather let it be as beautiful as the circumstances of the people will admit. Beautiful, but not elegant or luxuriously furnished, for 'softness' is out of harmony with the spirit of the religion of the Cross. Plainly substantial should be the ideal, with good material and good workmanship — nothing meretricious or cheap. This is an insult to the 'Lord of the Temple,' and hurtful to the character of its worshippers ; for to be constantly looking upon that which is 'cheap and nasty,' and associating it with worship of the Highest, cannot but affect worshippers prejudicially. If much adorning be desired, let it be added afterwards by such as can afford it, and by such as desire to break their vase of spikenard on the body of their Lord. But while there is inspiration and an educative value in a beautiful structure for some, to others it is unattractive. They feel that such buildings are not for them ; they are altogether too fine. Hence there arises the oft-debated problem, Is it better to build a church or mission hall ? For certain localities the vote must be given in favour of the latter, for it is a fact that the working classes will attend the hall when they will not enter the ecclesiastical structure.

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But against this the Roman Catholic experience is quoted. 'The Roman Catholics,' it is said, 'have beautiful buildings, and they get the poor people into them.' But why? Largely because the Roman Catholic priest has more influence over the people than the Protestant pastor; he can command, while the minister can only appeal. Hence the very first thing with us is suitability, and to put up a place into which the people will enter.

2. The building must be *comfortable*. It may be this without being costly or luxurious: at least as comfortably fitted up as the public-house. It should be so arranged that there will be no discomfort, and so that the preacher can easily see the people, and be seen by them. With Protestants both preacher and people receive much of their inspiration from being able to look each other in the face. In this we differ from the Roman Catholic worshipper, who is trained to look down and not up, at the book and not at the priest.

Let there be light, also, in the building, and plenty of it, for bright and cheery surroundings will assist the preacher to deliver a cheery message, and help the people to listen. Also, plenty of fresh air will add much to physical comfort and mental alertness. Some chapels and their appurtenances are a veritable 'black hole,' all the oxygen in the atmosphere used up quickly. No wonder that both preacher and people soon become sleepy, or that in a business meeting the officials quickly begin to quarrel. If these two extremes, 'sleeping sickness' and nervous

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irritability, are to be prevented, the atmosphere must be well oxygenized. Still, the air-currents must not be too swift, or there will be created that perennial excuse for non-attendance—the church draught (and who ever knew a place of worship, big or little, without a draught?). It is astonishing how sensitive people are to draughts on Sunday. They can bear them on Saturday in the warehouse and on Monday in the office, but on Sunday in chapel—why, ‘no constitution can stand it.’

Then let attention be given to acoustics. These may be considered satisfactory when people of moderate hearing can hear without difficulty. Of course the deaf will always complain. These are the trouble of the architect and the chronic difficulty of the public speaker. But it is impossible for any preacher to pitch his voice so as to meet their demands. Still, I am always sorry for those who are anxious to hear the word and cannot because they have grown dull of hearing. Some modern churches make provision for such by fixing a 'phone connecting the pulpit and certain pews, to which there are attached a number of indiarubber tubes fitted with discs, through which the sound is distributed to the separate listeners. Such an arrangement can be added to churches already built without much expense.

Also see that arrangements are made for making a building comfortably warm, for there will never come much inspiration to people who are shivering, and few ever ‘get converted with cold feet.’ To speak

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of such things may appear trivial, but they are very important, and frequently spell success or failure in much higher things. In a building scheme the choice of an architect is important, and one who can give these desiderata should be selected. If he cannot guarantee them in a broad and general way he is not the man you need.

3. A building also should be *serviceable*. Not too small, nor too large, but such as will meet present demands, with a margin for increase. Do not build for posterity, because likely enough it will not appreciate your generosity, and will probably call you a fool for your pains. There is an amount of common sense, when applied to this particular case, in the remark of a man who was asked to think of future generations in his gifts, and who said, 'Why should I do anything for posterity? Posterity has done nothing for me!' At any rate, in chapel building let posterity look after itself. Do not build an edifice in the spirit of competition, because some other church has fine premises; nor an ambitious structure so that it may be 'an ornament to the city.' All such ideas are worldly and foolish. In building, seek to include such rooms as will assist in the work of the church. Apart from the schoolroom there should be a hall for week-night preaching; a ladies' room or church-parlour; a young people's room for Guild and C.E. work, and a comfortably appointed minister's vestry—a place where he can spend half an hour pleasantly if needs be, without fear of asphyxiation or of being

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depressed by a dull and drab environment. The minister's retiring-room is frequently a disgrace to the premises, and a reflection upon the interest a church professes to take in its minister's well-being.

II. But the structure will have to be financed. The subject of Chapel Debts is one upon which Christians differ, some holding that a church has no more right than an individual to go into debt. Such a conclusion is based upon the assumption that all debt is wrong. But credit underlies modern commerce, and if disallowed there must be a reversion to the clumsy method of barter or of paying down cash. This may be possible where trading is limited, but practically impossible where it is world-wide. Credit is a necessity of modern civilization, and is in no way anti-Christian. Certainly, if Methodism had been compelled to pay for its chapels as they were built, it would not have been half the size it is to-day, and therefore by so much would the 'Kingdom' have been hindered. Still, while debt is permissible, it should be kept within reasonable bounds and not allowed to become old. Not only is it right, but good policy to seek its removal within the first few years of a chapel's erection. Where this has not been done, however, and debts remain, the next best thing is to attack and remove them as quickly as possible. The minister will be compelled to take the lead in all such movements, and their success or failure will depend very much upon his personal interest and effort.

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One of his chief duties will be to create and foster the spirit of generosity amongst his people. He must preach occasionally upon the subject, reminding them of their duty. The giving of many Christians is very uncertain. They give because somebody else does so, or because they have been trained to give so much weekly or monthly, which amount remains the same, although they have grown twenty times as rich. It is the minister's duty to enlighten such, to show them that at least a tenth of their income belongs to the Lord, and make them feel that giving of their substance is as much a part of their devotions as singing and praying. Still, while doing this he must refrain from scolding and certainly from begging, his chief aim being to lay before his people the teaching of Old and New Testament upon the subject. One thing in addition he must make clear, that the debt they have incurred is their own, and that they, and not the outside public, are responsible for its removal and for the money wherewith to carry on the work of the church.

But even when a church recognizes its responsibilities the minister will have to devise schemes for gathering in the money. In this task he must firmly set his face against all questionable methods, and such as infringe the laws of righteousness and love. Competition in its extreme and aggravated form must be excluded ; a gentle rivalry is admissible, but unholy emulation should be avoided.

There are many legitimate ways in which money may be raised.

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1: Firstly there is the method of *subscription*—i.e. a promise to pay a certain sum annually, quarterly, or monthly until the amount required is raised. In carrying this plan through, a very complete canvass of the church and congregation should be made, so that all classes of persons may be included. And care should be taken that those who can well afford it, but who are inclined to be niggardly, do not get off with less than their share. If, however, this cannot be done, then leave such until the last, so that their spirit may not stand as a bad example for others. In arranging a subscription list it is best for instalments to be paid in frequently, because this plan presses less heavily upon the poor.

2. A common device in America for liquidating debts is the *share system*—i.e. the issuing of a certain number of certificates for varying amounts, covering the whole liability. The debt, say, is £150. This is divided up into fifty shares at £1 each, one hundred at 10s., and two hundred at 5s. Certificates for these are issued, to be honoured in three, six, or twelve months.

3. Frequently a debt is removed by means of a *letter of appeal* from the pastor, in which he asks for so much to be paid in, through the collection boxes, at a given time. Or he may ask them to bring their amounts to him in his vestry on a certain day, say his own birthday or on the anniversary of the church. I have only adopted this last practice once, when £20 was brought—the most easily raised sum of money in my experience.

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4. But perhaps the *bazaar* is the most popular and successful modern method of raising money. It is so because many people will make gifts in kind who cannot, or will not, give cash, and because it serves as a culminating point for gathering in floating and promiscuous donations. There is no doubt something to be said against bazaars, especially as they are sometimes carried out. They may release Christians from their financial duties by drawing money from outsiders, and so prove fatal to the spirit of true benevolence. Then, too, they frequently rob the church of real spiritual power. On the whole, both minister and church will be well advised to do without them if possible. But if compelled to hold them, be careful to exclude as far as possible injurious elements, and at the same time see that they are well organized. Much depends upon a good secretary, also upon the right grouping of workers, upon the minister himself keeping in constant touch with every section of workers, and upon his ability to keep 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

5. A method that usually accompanies the bazaar, yet is no integral part of it, is that of *soliciting subscriptions*. This is an undesirable occupation for a minister, yet it is one into which he is compelled occasionally to enter. It is, however, one that the church should not lightly thrust upon him. The work is most distasteful when subscriptions have to be sought from members of other churches, and still more so when men of the world, without interest in

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religion, have to be canvassed. In these days of Free Church federation, there is nothing unreasonable in asking for help from Nonconformists. This is something altogether different from approaching Anglicans and Roman Catholics, which has occasionally to be done. When begging has to be done the following suggestions may help :

(1) Do not approach men whose lives are openly profligate, or who are engaged in questionable trades, or making money in questionable ways. 'This is not the Lord's money, and the Lord wants none of it.'

(2) Go with the subscription list first to the men who are likeliest to give, and to give freely, and persuade such to enter their names early on the list, because if it starts with a small amount, especially from one who ought to have done better, the subsequent subscribers are likely to give little too. It is useless to call this kind of thing mean, for all sorts of motives enter into people's giving. Many give not according to the merit of the cause or as they can afford, but because some one else gives. The inquiry is frequently made, 'What is Mr. So-and-so giving?' and they take their cue from him, or from some one else.

(3) Endeavour to see the possible donor in his own home, because if visited in his office, or at his works, he will probably be so engrossed in business that he cannot listen to your plea, and is more in the mood for getting than giving. But if he cannot be seen in any other place than in his office, then

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let it be after he has attended to his letters and has set the day's business machinery in motion.

(4) Vary the plan of approach according to the type of man visited, and make most prominent that phase of work in which he is most interested. A live church has many kinds of activities within its borders—social, ethical, religious; any one of these can be put to the front legitimately, and alternately pressed home as the occasion may demand. There is always some feature of church work that can be successfully presented to a generous man.

(5) Be prepared, however, for reprisals and rebuffs. Take defeat good-temperedly and leave the fray smiling. This will be an 'open sesame' in days to come, for the person approached will be saying in his heart as you depart, 'What a hard-hearted curmudgeon I am to turn a man like that away!' Under the sunshine of your smile and gracious demeanour the fruit of benevolence ripened a little and came nearer to falling that day.

None of these schemes may commend themselves, but a minister cannot have a knowledge of too many plans from which to choose. I have found it a good method to make a note of any scheme of which I have heard, or read, or seen at work, and at a suitable time and place have made use of some of them. Pigeon-hole all information, for you never know when it may become useful.

But money-raising is only a means, not an end, and when it is an end, which is the case occasionally, it becomes degrading. The church will raise money

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most easily when spiritual life is its first interest and at its strongest. A lady some time ago wrote to the editor of a well-known daily paper asking how she could best raise money for a small country church. She said: 'Do you think it would be advisable to try a whist drive? We have had calico-parties, sugar-parties, fish-ponds, a mock post office, and the like. Can you suggest any new form of entertainment?' To this the editor answered, 'We recommend a revival of religion.'¹ Verily, 'the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.'

¹ Stall, *Church Work*, p. 185.

XIX

The Administration of the Sacraments

I. BAPTISM

AS Protestants we recognize two Sacraments, and two only—Baptism and the Lord's Supper ; and we hold this view because they alone are commanded by the New Testament Scriptures. These we regard as obligatory, because they are established and enjoined by our Lord. As there are widely divergent views about their meaning, it is important that we should have clearly defined ideas concerning them, i.e. have a definite conception of what they mean to *us*. The Methodist view stands midway between that of the Roman Catholic and High Anglican on the one hand, and that of the Quakers on the other. The former make them exclusive channels of grace ; being of the very essence of religion, and indispensable to it. 'They are not so much parts of Christianity, but rather they are Christianity itself.'¹ The Society of Friends is at the opposite pole, and not only denies any such efficacy, but regards them as anachronisms and snares, tending to formalize the

¹ Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 400.

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faith, and to empty it of its living, spiritual content. Our position is that, while they have no magical merit, and are not necessary to salvation, they are sacred symbols and significant seals of grace. They symbolize in a vivid way the central realities of faith; but they are more than symbols, 'they are channels through which spiritual influences are actually conveyed, and means by which communion between man and his Maker is rendered more real and vital.'¹

Baptism in our own and in most other Christian churches, is a rite performed almost exclusively upon infants and young children, and rarely upon adults, and so excludes what is known as 'the baptism of believers.' The question naturally arises, Have we a right to baptize children, and, if so, upon what grounds? It must be admitted that baptism in the early Church was largely, although not exclusively, that of adults, and took place upon confession of faith. This was obviously the case, because the Church was a newly established institution, and drew its converts from an adult community. But presumably it was not confined to adults, for we read of whole households being baptized, and it is more likely than not that children were included in the number.

It must, however, be conceded that infant baptism was not the New Testament form of the ordinance. It was possibly permitted, although its practice is nowhere definitely described. Yet infant baptism

¹ W. Adams Brown, *Christian Theology*, p. 407.

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'is a legitimate development of church life.' The Church was at first individualistic ; i.e. was more an aggregation of separate persons than a living body, and baptism on confession of faith was that form of the rite which best harmonized with this condition of things. But gradually the Church became social, began to regard itself as a living whole, to assume solidarity, and became a kingdom to which the *children* of its citizens belonged as well as the citizens themselves. In the words of Professor, Allen 'The world of man was henceforth to be created within the Church ; infants from their birth were to be received into its fold.'

Hence from the end of the third century, possibly earlier, when the individualistic note was passing into the social, infant baptism became the rule. Baptism, in the Christian Church, takes the place of circumcision in the Jewish Church. Both are initiatory rites, and *infant* baptism more truly succeeds to the older Jewish ceremony than adult baptism. Circumcision was the ordinance by which a male child became a member of the Jewish Church and at the same time a Jewish citizen, for Church and nation were one. In neither Church nor nation did the female child count for anything, but was included in the male—a clear witness to the inferior place woman held even in such a noble nation as Israel, showing how much more exalted a place she occupies in Christianity. Now, to refuse to baptize infants and to admit them into the Church is to give them less advantages in the new dispensation

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than' they had in the old, and to put them on a lower religious plane than that which they occupied in the Church of Moses.

Then, again, the teaching of Jesus concerning children—'of such is the kingdom of heaven'—gives a tacit permission to perform this rite at an early age. He does not command their baptism, but if they are of the 'kingdom' they surely can be recognized as such by the ordinance He ordained. Also, when our Lord gave His great commission to His disciples to go out into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them in the Triune name, He must have included the children, for 'disciple' means a learner, a scholar in a school; and children are pre-eminently this.

But what is the meaning of this rite? The Sacramentarians teach that in it, and by it, a child becomes regenerated. Even the Anglican Prayer-book, in spite of its supposed Protestant character, contains an element of this teaching, showing how imperfectly it has been purged from Romanism, for it teaches that a child in baptism is 'made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' Very much nearer to Scripture teaching is that part of the Catechism where it speaks of this Sacrament as the 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'; a statement (when compared with the foregoing) that shows how the Romish and Protestant elements struggle for the mastery in this document. The Sacramentarian position is unscriptural, materialistic,

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mechanical and irrational, while the Protestant view is at once scriptural, spiritual, and reasonable. According to Jesus, the child is a member of the kingdom because it is a child, not because it has passed through an outward ordinance, either of circumcision or baptism. 'Baptism does not make him God's child, any more than coronation makes a prince a king. The prince was king the moment his father died; coronation solemnly witnesses to a fact, but does not create the fact' (Dr. Gladden).

The Sacramentarian view of baptism has given rise to most illogical ideas and irrational action. It has led to that feverish rush after a minister to baptize a child when ill, fearing that the poor little innocent would be lost eternally without the few drops of water; also to the practice of interring an unbaptized child without the usual burial service, and to the horrible opinion that because they were not baptized many infants were writhing in eternal torment. An incipient form of this doctrine probably lay behind the strange practice referred to by the Apostle Paul, of 'baptizing for the dead'—i.e. the custom of baptizing a living person as a proxy for one who had died unbaptized. It was a protest against such irrational views of the ordinance that led to the revival of the practice of baptizing adults, and to the establishment of the Baptist denomination. This community has consistently refused to baptize children, believing that the rite should accompany confession of faith, and be performed on adults only. At the same time, this position, while it is a return

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to Scripture methods, does an injustice to the child. This is being keenly felt by many in that Church, and there are signs of a relaxation of the older rigidity. Many churches are now known as Union or Open-Communion churches, in which members are received with no other baptism than that which they received in infancy, who freely mix up with their stricter brethren, nobody knowing the difference between them. Moreover, many Baptist parents are feeling that something more ought to be done for their children than bidding them wait until years of maturity, and so are bringing them into the house of God, to be 'named' if not baptized; at the same time publicly dedicating them to their Lord, and to the service of His Church. They feel that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven,' and that this fact should be early recognized.

Very few will stickle to-day for any particular mode of administering the ordinance—i.e. whether it shall be by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling. Scores of learned treatises have been written on the subject, and much bitterness of feeling engendered, but the New Testament does not regard method as essential. Certainly sprinkling was 'one method of ceremonial cleansing,' and therefore presumably was one form of Christian baptism. The three methods were sanctioned and practised by the Early Church. But while the mode is somewhat indefinite, the sacrament itself is commanded, and one of the functions of the Christian ministry is its administration, which should be done in a manner that com-

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ports with its sacredness, i.e. simply, sincerely, reverently.

1. The ordinance should be part of a service; it should take place in connexion with the ordinary public service, or with one arranged specifically for the purpose. There is something to be said for a separate service, say, once a month, on some convenient week-evening, or better still on a Sabbath afternoon, when parents are usually best able to attend. This may cause a little delay, which is rather an advantage than a disadvantage, especially for the mother and child. The only objection to waiting is the tradition that a mother after the birth of a child must not be seen out-of-doors until she has been to church or chapel—a tradition commendable in so far as it expresses a desire to give the first-fruits of restored health to the Lord, but frequently it is merely a custom arising from superstition rather than gratitude.

The drawback, however, to a separate service is that usually it is more or less private, parents only being present, whereas 'it is most fitting that it be done in the sanctuary, and in the presence of the congregation.' Yet this is better than having the rite performed in the home, for at least it is semi-public. On the surface it appears desirable for it to take place in the bosom of the family, but usually the motive for this is a shrinking on the part of parents from the duty of openly and publicly dedicating their child to the Church and its Lord. Therefore let the minister, unless the case is excep-

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tional, discourage baptisms in any other place than the sanctuary. But wherever held, let it not be lightly treated, or hurriedly administered, as too often is the case. Most churches provide an order of service for the ordinance which tends to dignity and reverence.

2. In addition a short address is seemly.

(1) To the parents. I emphasize the plural, for it is the duty of both parents to be present. The minister should make a point of this, and urge the father as well as mother to take part in the ordinance. Any words spoken should be few. They may explain the meaning of the ordinance and emphasize parental responsibility. It should be shown that the rite is not magical, having no power to charm away evil or mechanically to command good. On the other hand, it must be shown that it is more than a religious form, or compliance with a social demand ; that it is a distinctly religious act, and so should be performed reverently and believingly. Such words will not be without their effect upon other parents present.

(2) Words also should be addressed to the church, for in this ordinance the church is receiving into its fold a new member, and it is fitting at such times that it should be reminded of its responsibilities. This is another reason why the rite should be performed publicly, for when it takes place in the home there is no congregation to have its duties pointed out. It is right that the church should be there, at least representatively, to receive the new

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applicant into its midst. Not that a baptized child is a member of the church in the same sense as a professed believer. It is rather, to use Dr. Beet's figure, in the outer court of the sanctuary. It is in the sanctuary, but not a part of the inner circle. It is on the other side of the partition, waiting to pass through the gate of personal confession. Now the church, by this act of reception, takes upon itself important duties. In it she, through her minister, pledges herself to protect, instruct, and train the child thus received. Parents bringing a child to be baptized can rightfully claim from the church and its minister reasonable assistance in their endeavour to train it morally and religiously. This is, in part, recognized by the church in various institutions it has set up for the training of the young. But a yet closer and stricter attention is needed. Every child's name should be copied out of the baptismal register, and a list kept of all who have thus joined the church. This roll should be frequently called over, and the little ones placed under selected overseers, who will keep watch over them, visiting occasionally their homes, and inducing them at the right time to join the Sunday school and the catechumen department of the church. Indeed, they should never be allowed to pass out of the church's sight any more than a child should pass from under the eye of its parents. A pastor must keep his attention upon infants baptized into his church; they are part of his charge. At present this relationship is but feebly realized in, and but poorly worked out by, many churches. We

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baptize a child, often in the crudest manner, enter its name in the register, hand over the certificate, receive the fee, and there the matter ends. The child passes out of the thought of minister and people, and an appalling waste of life, religiously speaking, is the consequence. These baptized ones are ours, and should be treated as such—their names entered upon our visiting-list, and their religious interests tenderly and carefully watched. Some such attitude alone will save the church from blame, and throw upon the child when it comes to years of maturity the responsibility of either passing into the inner circle of active believers or of turning away.

3. Usually a part of the baptismal service is the thanksgiving prayer on behalf of the mother. This offering on her part may often be formal, but the minister, at any rate, should treat it as real and sincere, and express it as simply and delicately as possible. In this, perhaps more than in any other part of the service, he feels the need of a prepared form of words, such as that given in our Order of Service Book. Reverent simplicity should be the note of this prayer—indeed, the note of the whole service. This is not always easily secured, perhaps less easily than in any other ordinance of the church. There are many possible elements of distraction. The awkwardness and shyness of the minister in receiving, and of the mother or nurse in presenting, the child; its possible cry through the water being cold, or from its being held uncomfortably: such episodes are disturbing and trying to most ministers,

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especially to the young and inexperienced. The chief difficulty with most ministers in this ordinance is the fact that all sorts and conditions of people, with very mixed motives, frequently as a matter of custom, bring their children to be baptized. A minister, of course, has no right to refuse any, but he cannot help feeling the incongruity of the service. Speaking personally, if I had my choice I would restrict the ordinance to children of believing parents. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland baptizes children of church members only.

Occasionally, although now very seldom, adults have to be baptized. For such the ordinary service is unsuitable, or, at least, will need modifying. Amongst things added will be a set of questions, such as : ' What do you believe ? ' ' What promises are you willing to make for the future ? ' Such questions, however, should not be suddenly sprung upon the candidate, but submitted to him beforehand so that he may be able to give a considered answer. Such questions are best drawn up by the church ; those contained in the Methodist Service Books are very suitable.

II. THE LORD'S SUPPER

IN many senses this is the most solemn, yet the most gladsome, service of the Christian Church, and certainly one of the most helpful. It is necessary that the minister should have clear and settled views

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as to its meaning, for there are wide and divergent opinions as to its nature and value. But, in one form or other, it is an ordinance that has been observed from the earliest Christian times by every branch of the Church with but few exceptions, notably the Society of Friends. Probably the form has changed from what it was at first, but the ordinance itself has been one and the same. During the first two centuries it was 'organically related to,' and frequently identified with, another ordinance of the early church—the *agape*, or love-feast. But the distinction between them became clear towards the end of the second century, owing to the fact that the *agape* was an evening meal, while the Eucharist had gradually become a morning celebration. By the end of the fourth century the *agape* had practically disappeared, leaving the Lord's Supper in undisputed possession as the only sacrament of this order in the Church. This suppression arose largely through the growth of a sacramentarian conception of the Eucharist, changing it from a simple meal into a mystery, and from a supper into a sacrament. There have been repeated attempts at different times to re-establish the *agape* as a church ordinance, but with small results. The most successful attempt in the present day is that amongst the different sects of the Brethren, members of which testify to its being the most spiritually helpful service of the Church—a kind of informal weekly Communion. During the first half-century of the Primitive Methodist Church's existence a resolute

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attempt was made to revive the practice, but the attempt has failed, for if there is one ordinance dead in that Church to-day it is the once popular public love-feast.

In the Lord's Supper itself there has been considerable development both in idea and form. At first it was a simple memorial meal, eaten by the disciples in order to keep alive the remembrance of their departed Lord, and also eaten with a firm belief in, and eager expectation of, His speedy return. The ordinance was intended to keep active this hope in their hearts; it was intimately associated with His *Parousia*. But as the hope faded away, or was unrealized in the form they expected, the meal that nourished the hope gradually changed into a substitute for His presence, and the elements of which it was composed, bread and wine, became objects of special devotion and reverence.¹ Thus began that process of materialization which we see consummated in the Eucharistic superstitions of the Greek, Roman Catholic, and some other churches. This literalization had its root in the desire, latent in human nature, to incarnate ideas and to make the spiritual concrete; also in that feeling of reverence for the ordinance which had gradually grown up. We appreciate the underlying psychology, and also respect and share the reverence; but when it is asserted that the bread and wine are the actual body and blood of Christ, reason revolts and we are compelled to part company. In such teaching reverence becomes

¹ Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 526.

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superstition, and a beautiful means of grace is changed into a magical rite. We have no quarrel with our Roman Catholic and Anglican friends in their regard for the ordinance, but join issue with them when they declare that in it spiritual realities are transmuted into material elements. Of course there is a material side to the ordinance, otherwise it would not be a symbol. The material symbols commonly used are bread and wine: other elements might answer as well, but these seem to have been those used by the Master, and have since been almost universally regarded as the most fitting symbols. It is true that some ascetic sects have used water instead of wine,¹ and some others wine diluted with water, and many in recent years unfermented wine; still, wine in some form has been the common sacramental drink.

As already hinted, the Sacerdotalist declares that in and by the consecrating act of the priest these elements are changed, and that the communicant eats the very body and drinks the very blood of Christ. Over against these views stand those of the Reformed Church, which are that Christ is not in the elements, but rather in the heart of the believer and in the spirit in which the elements are received: i.e. they become a Real Presence when they are received in the spirit of faith, sacrifice, and of love. 'If there be transubstantiation of the bread and wine, it is wrought by the faith of the congregation, in the strength imparted by the Holy Spirit taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto

¹ Duchesne, *The Early Church*, p. 374.

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us.'¹ Also our view is that, as there has not taken place any literal change in the elements, there can be no offering again to God of the body and blood of Christ as the sacrifice of the Mass implies, nor any continual sacrifice except in the person of the one who receives it. In this sense there is a perpetual offering, for the recipient associates himself with his crucified Lord, and presents himself as an offering to God.

This view makes the ordinance more than a symbol or memorial, for there can be 'no mere memorial of one who is always living, always present . . . and always the mover of it.'² It is the experience of the believer that Christ is present in this ordinance in a peculiar sense; it is a special means by which he lays hold of Christ. At the same time, while it is this, it is not, as the Sacerdotalists assert, the one supreme channel of grace, the one 'appointed means for the impartation of a mystic grace not to be obtained in any other way,'³ and such that no other means is comparable to it. Such a view is unscriptural. The Scriptures put the 'Word of God' in the front as the chief means of salvation and channel of grace. Prayer also is described as a highway of blessing; and thousands of Christians, if compelled to give up one, could better spare the Eucharist than either prayer or the Word. But while it is only one among other means of grace, it is a means most nourishing and helpful to the soul,

¹ Allen, *Christian Institutions*, p. 563.

² Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, p. 81.

³ W. Adams Brown, *Theology*, p. 493.

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and ought not to be neglected ; and those who do so suffer much spiritual loss.

I. The question arises, How often should the ordinance be administered ? The Sacerdotalist, in harmony with his views of its importance, favours frequent celebrations : if it be efficacious in removing sin, then it cannot be received too often—not only once a week, but on every day in the week. On the other hand, there are churches that go to the other extreme, notably in Scotland, holding the service twice a year only. There is something to be said for an infrequent celebration, for a too frequent one may create familiarity, and so beget indifference. Usually that which is rare is prized most. But here, as elsewhere, the middle way is the true one. The words in which the ordinance was established—‘ *As oft as ye do this* ’—imply a moderate frequency. If a monthly ordinance be established, it will be well to arrange for one administration occasionally in the morning, as a few people at least attend morning worship only. The evening, however, is the more opportune time for the bulk of Free Church people, so perhaps the best arrangement is one such service in the morning to two in the evening. Some persons object to evening celebration because the morning allows the recipient to take the elements fasting—which is an important point for those who believe that the bread and wine have become the flesh and blood of our Lord ; but we do not hold such views, and think that the most convenient time of the day should be chosen, whether it be morning, noon, or night.

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2. It should be a service in itself, distinct and self-complete, and if it follows public worship it must of course be short. But a service of some kind is a necessity, in order to create the suitable atmosphere. As for every service, so suitable surroundings are needful to make this effective. Song, prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and perhaps a very short address will help to create the desirable environment. But the preceding service may also minister to this. The sermon, especially, may be such as will tend to create the suitable atmosphere : it may be a discourse on the nature and importance of the ordinance, or one on some event associated with the death of Christ, or on some sacrificial incident in His life, or upon the oneness of believers with Christ. Not only is a congregation instructed and helped by such themes, but a suitable setting is created for the following service and one spirit is made to run through the whole. In the earlier service, or in the invitation given to the congregation to remain, the duty of participating should be pressed upon the people. In the Primitive Methodist Church there is much need for this. The rite is frequently misunderstood and more often neglected. Some do not attend because they are without the desire, others hesitate because they have an exaggerated idea of the sacredness of the service, thinking that they are not worthy, and that they will suffer some pain or penalty if they do. It is the minister's duty to enlighten such and show them that the possession of such fears is a proof rather of fitness than of unfitness. Also the

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plea' needs to be persistently urged that it is the Master's wish that His followers should remember Him in this way, and that it is the duty of all such to obey His commands. The people stand in much need of instruction upon this great ordinance, and its value needs to be pressed upon their attention and hearts.

3. How it should be administered is a minor point. Should it be received sitting or kneeling? Should the elements be taken to the communicants in their seats, or should they come and kneel around the table of the Lord? Some think the custom of kneeling savours of Romanism, while others cannot get their usual blessing in any other way. It is the custom of Methodists to receive it kneeling around the communion-rail. The Congregationalists, Baptists, and others usually partake of it sitting, while the Lutherans usually eat and drink standing. If the elements are distributed to the communicants in their pews the tendency to monotony is relieved, and the attention retained, by the president repeating, slowly, a few suitable portions of Scripture. It is important that the minister should have all the details of the service well arranged beforehand, so that there may be as little disturbance as possible. Any distraction mars the influence of such a service, and outward order and quietness are in harmony with its nature and help to make it a real blessing. The minister himself should also be in a calm and restful mood, which he will be able to impart to others. This mood will be helped by the whole body of believers,

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whether at the table, waiting to approach it, or after retiring from it, concentrating their thought upon spiritual things and engaging in prayer and meditation. And this in order that the communicant may hear the 'still small voice,' and also that he may have an opportunity to re-dedicate his life to the service of his dying and living Lord.

Let the minister himself seek to get as much out of the service as possible, and see that his own spirit is right, for he is a communicant as well as an administrant. By frequently engaging in such services he is in danger of becoming a formalist—of treating them professionally. He needs to pray continually to be kept in the spirit of the ordinance, for a sincere and interested president makes an interested and sincere participant. 'Unless he himself be moved and bowed by the mighty emotions of the hour, his leadership can only mar, instead of fostering, the devotions of the people.'¹

As to whether others besides the communicants should be encouraged to attend the service is an open question. As a rule people feel that unless they are actually going to partake of the elements, they have no right to remain. This view needs to be changed, and others besides communicants should be encouraged to attend; for a few minutes' quiet worship, under the influences of the hour, cannot but be helpful to all. Especially should the children and young people be invited to remain, so that they may be prepared for their first sacrament.

¹ Dykes, *The Christian Minister*, p. 170.

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A, word here may not be out of place upon administering the elements to the sick. While in the Roman and Anglican Churches there is much superstition on this subject, raising the question of what is known as 'Reservation,' i.e. the question of keeping for private distribution the elements that are supposed to have been changed, or transubstantiated, in public, no such controversy affects the Free Churches, and a minister may administer the bread and wine privately without any fear of misunderstanding. But the Church should not encourage private communion any more than private baptism. On the other hand, the elements should not, on account of some possible misunderstanding, be refused to the aged, the infirm, the sick, and the dying. Under such circumstances it will be well for the minister to take a friend or two with him to the home of the recipient, so that the ordinance may also be a service. He should go prepared with the bread and wine. The possession of a little pocket-service is very convenient, and churches might see that their minister is provided with one. Making private administration a semi-public service is more appropriate than for the minister to attend alone, which savours too much of the Romish viaticum—a kind of final act by which the sick one is made ready to die. But, whether administered publicly or privately, this is an ordinance that needs to be conducted in a right spirit (simply, quietly, reverently), as representing and realizing the presence of the dying, risen, and redeeming Lord.

XX

Pastoral Visitation

I

IT is needless to discuss the point as to whether a minister should be a pastor as well as a teacher, because a pastor he *must* be if he is to succeed in his work. A few exceptional men may be able to hold a congregation by preaching only, but for the ordinary man visitation is essential to success. The public services are the people's chief supplies of spiritual food ; but no church is well and sufficiently nourished that is not fed directly by the hand of the pastor, or that fails to get a personal word from his lips.

Theoretically speaking, a church is its own pastor, i.e. the responsibility for visiting its members falls primarily upon itself. A few churches rise to their duty, put the theory into practice, and assist their ministers by having, as part of their organization, a visiting committee, which sends out consecrated men and women to visit their respective districts, noting removals and fresh arrivals, paying special attention to members of their own church, and taking a still more especial interest in the

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poor' and the sick. Such committees should see that the sick have all the attention they require, and that they have suitable material nourishment ; also that the poor have their wants relieved. Visitors of this kind should be in close touch with the pastor, and report to him such cases as need his personal attention. This is all very well in theory, and here and there works well, but, speaking generally, as a matter of fact, if visiting is to be done, the minister has to do it. Usually visiting committees, formed very carefully and started with great promise of success, grow sick in six months, and die in twelve. This is true even in Methodism, where theoretically the class-leader is the pastor. This was the founder's idea when he formed his society classes and placed the members under selected guides. By this means the flock was to be tended, freeing the ministers for the work of itinerant preaching. The chief business of the early Methodist ministers was to evangelize and to induce the converted to join the church, but it was the leader's duty to shepherd the flock. This idea, however good in theory, has largely broken down in practice, the visiting falling largely upon the shoulders of the minister.

We have had heated discussions as to which is the more important work, preaching or visiting ; but such a controversy is like arguing as to which is the more important person in the home, husband or wife. The whole debate is futile, for they are not opposites, but complements each of the other ; they are 'functions of the same office' ; they are like the

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right and left hands, which are not opposed, but combine to promote the well-being of the whole body. 'The preacher who is not a pastor grows remote. The pastor who is not a preacher grows petty. . . . Be both, for you cannot really be one unless you also are the other' ¹

Visitation is necessary to a healthy church and to a healthy ministry. It is needed alike by pastor and people. The preacher cannot sermonize so freely and fruitfully, and certainly cannot preach so effectively, if he neglects this duty. By doing it he is better able to enter into the life and demands of his people. As he looks into their faces and remembers their needs there are started such trains of thought and fresh currents of sympathy as make his sermon real and effective.

I. Let us consider the *object* of pastoral visitation. It should not be done merely because it has been customary to do so, or to induce people to come to a service at which we are going to preach ; this kind of visiting is very much akin to that of the street hawker, who goes from house to house, knocking at the doors and proclaiming the kind of wares he has to sell. Nor is its true object achieved when done in a professional spirit, as the doctor calls upon his patients. The pastor has, it is true, been trained, like the doctor, to do certain work, and may be sent for as the physician is. But there is this difference between them—the one does his work because he is paid, the pastor must do it because it is his duty, pay or no

¹ Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 77.

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pay.. The object of the doctor is accomplished when he diagnoses, and prescribes for, a case. It is his profession, and when he has done his work he departs and sends in his bill. Some argue that a similar professionalism may mark the pastoral office. 'The minister,' says W. G. Blaikie, 'has come for the purpose of promoting the spiritual and eternal welfare of the family, and therefore the sooner he addresses himself to his errand the better.'¹ In other words, just as the minister enters the church on Sunday for the specific purpose of delivering a definite message, he should do similarly when visiting the home. The question arises, Is this the true object of visitation? I think not. Should it not rather be to establish such a relationship and friendship between himself and his people as will set a door open for his usual ministrations, giving to them power, making his general influence dynamical? Of course in his visitations he will occasionally speak directly on things pertaining to the kingdom, and make the visit a service, but 'the primary object of this house-to-house visitation is the establishment of friendly personal relations between himself and the members of his flock, old and young. It is far better that the professional business of the pastor should be subordinated in these calls to the purpose of putting himself on terms of cordial intimacy with his people.'²

But although this is the general purpose of

¹ *The Ministry of the Word*, p. 272.

² W. Gladden, *The Christian Pastor*, p. 199.

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visitation it contains specific elements ; while it is unprofessional it is not aimless.

(1) *Instruction* will be included in its purpose. However unconventional he may be, the minister is ever the teacher of his people, out of the pulpit as well as in. Not that his conversation should take the form of sermons, but the intercourse should be such as will make his people wiser in matters of faith and duty ; enlightening the understanding, correcting ideas, confirming belief, guiding conduct, and supplementing, by a personal word, his public teaching. Subjects will come up in conversation which will give him his opportunity, and his words will be all the more effective because the intercourse is free and spontaneous.

(2) *Reclamation* also will be another of its objects. It may be of one who has grown lukewarm in religion, or even backslidden from the Christian faith and life. The shepherd cannot allow this wandering one to perish ; he must follow him, and bring him back to the fold. He will not be satisfied with paying a formal visit, because it is his duty, but will go again and again, following him up with tender interest, and by the holy compulsion of love restoring him to safety and peace.

Or it may be a visit to one who has not yet made a profession of religion ; perhaps some anxious mother, or wife, or sister has asked the minister to visit and speak to the wayward one, and he dare not refuse. The task is difficult, needing much courage and tact. It may be that he will not accomplish

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much, for a time, but he must not give up too soon. He may probably have to change his tactics ; like the angler who brings out a different fly for different seasons, so with the 'fisher of men.' This class of visiting tries the mettle of a man much more than the ordinary kind, but ought not on this account to be shirked. There is only one more difficult case ; that of a man dying in his sin. It is hard to believe that a man can be saved through fear at the eleventh hour, and yet a minister cannot refuse to visit a case of this kind. Occasionally he finds a real conviction of sin, and when he does the task is easy. Usually, however, the dying one is insensitive to the solemnity of the hour, has little consciousness of wrong or danger. With such a case the pastor must be faithful ; he dare not let the soul pass away without warnings, yet may accompany them with words of hope, mercy, and pardon.

(3) Another object in visitation is to carry *sympathy*. In order to do this successfully the minister must be sympathetic. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is very insistent upon this. He says that no man must aspire to the priesthood who is not touched by the sight of human infirmity, and who is not able to 'bear gently with the ignorant and the erring.' But it must be a real and not a simulated sympathy. When I left my father's farm in my teens I became an apprentice in a large drapery establishment. It was customary for the head of the firm, when a person of importance died, to send a letter of condolence to the family. But

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between the lines I used to read, 'Please give me the order for the mourning.' A minister is in danger of giving a professional instead of a real sympathy. The frequent and various experiences of family life will supply a suitable motive for a visit, and in this way make it natural and effective. 'Births and deaths, illness and loss of friends, young people leaving home, business disasters—anything, in short, which touches most nearly the family heart, is an opportunity for a pastoral call not to be neglected.'¹ Goldsmith, in his *Deserted Village*, sums up the character of the poor but faithful village pastor thus :

But in his duty prompt, at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt, for all.

But it must be a strong, manly sympathy, and not a soft, maudlin sentimentality; a sympathy that will reprove as well as comfort, chasten as well as cheer. Not a sympathy that lies down beside the smitten one, helping him to hug his griefs, but such as will stir him to rise above them, that will carry with it inspiration; for the truest sympathy one can show another is not to carry his burden for him, but to invest him with such strength as will make him able to carry his own. 'Silver and gold have I none, but . . . in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk.' It is the minister's duty to give such real sympathy as will create strength, that will at once goad and guide, giving inspiration to the

¹ Dykes, *The Christian Minister and his Duties*, p. 312.

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faint and a crutch to the lame. Like Father O'Flynn in the song—

Coaxing the craizy ones,
Soothing onaisy ones,
Dhriving the laizy ones
On with a sthick.

2. Whom shall we visit ? These fall into two broad divisions—the healthy and the sick.

(1) The healthy in body and mind. It is to such as these that the phrase 'family visiting' applies—i.e. a periodical visit to the homes of the members of a minister's congregation. To do this anything like regularly and frequently, under modern circumstances, is difficult—difficult, for one reason, on account of present-day business and industrial conditions. In the past men and women pursued their work at or near home ; but now business men, at least in cities, leave home early and return tired, if not late ; the industrial classes follow their tasks largely in factories and central workshops ; so that if a minister wishes to see a family together he must do so either early in the morning or late at night, or on the Sabbath day. Then, again, the demands of modern church life are very exacting ; church machinery is so extensive as to make it difficult to put in much visiting. There is, however, some compensation in this modern multiplicity of meetings, inasmuch as it brings the minister into contact with most of his people in a social way at least once a week, and so gives him an opportunity of speaking

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the indispensable personal word. But, in spite of difficulties, family visiting must be done; people expect it, and their expectation must not be cut off.

How often a call should be made will depend upon the size of the church and the location of the members. Some ministers aim to visit all their members once a quarter, or once in six months, while others think once a year sufficient. The late Dr. John Watson made it a practice of seeing his members in their home once every twelve months, and in this he included the maid in domestic service as well as the wife of the merchant-prince. In considering the question whom we shall visit, we must beware of predilections, of preferences, of going to certain homes very frequently because they are hospitable and yield good company. If certain ministers' diaries were faithfully kept, a very frequent entry would be, 'Visited the Mayor, or Councillor So-and-so, stayed supper, had a pleasant time.' But this is not pastoral work, and should be classed rather as recreation and not as family visiting. Of course a minister will have his personal friends in his church, which is quite right; but he should not count visits paid them as part of his *work*, nor should they be paid in his allotted working time, but on his day off, or when his ordinary work is done. Human nature being what it is, there is a constant temptation to spend more time than can rightly be spared in the homes of the nice people of the church—a temptation that must be watched and resisted if a minister is to do his work and be

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worthy of his vocation. Like his Master, he must leave the ninety and nine, and go out after the weak, the maimed, and the lost. A few exacting people will complain that he does not pay enough attention to them, but the church as a whole will honour him.

(2) The sick demand special attention and treatment.

(a) There are the sick in body, who may be roughly divided into those suffering casually and chronically; those who are ill for a few weeks or months, and those who are never well. However busy a minister's life may be, he must make time to visit the sick of his flock. They are his first charge, and, next to preaching, demand the first-fruits of his time. In the home where there is sickness, after the doctor and the nurse the minister is next in demand and command.

(b) Another and larger class needing attention will be the sick in soul; and just as bodily complaints are many and different, so are psychical and religious.

Amongst the psychically sick will be the doubter. Thomas has been in the Church from the beginning, but present-day conditions tend to aggravate his malady. The rapid discoveries of science, the practically unanimous acceptance of the law of evolution, the changed views of the Bible arising from the newer criticism, all tend to create doubt, to loose the soul from its ancient moorings; and it is the minister's duty to help to find for such a

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new anchorage. This he will do better by a personal word than by preaching on the subject, although this also might be done. His words may be very effectively supplemented by placing in the doubter's hands some helpful book which will act as an antidote to the malady, such as, e.g., Welsh's *In Relief of Doubt*, or one of Dr. Ballard's excellent books. Perhaps the most helpful way of all is by the minister keeping his own faith active and strong. It is important for the minister to urge upon his inquiring friend the value, indeed the necessity, of making the venture of faith, of accepting as true the things he is asked to believe, for 'he that willeth to do the will of God shall know of the doctrine.' Endeavour to show him that salvation is more a matter of the heart than of the head, and that it is possible for a man to be a Christian without being able to settle every point of doctrine.

Despondency is frequently a form of soul-sickness. It may arise from many causes, but often takes on a religious character. People get, e.g., the idea that they have committed the 'unpardonable sin,' and are without hope. Such cases are, however, much rarer than they once were, owing to a more Christian understanding of God and a better knowledge of mental pathology. But the minister will still have to deal with such cases, and if he be wise he will take the doctor into his confidence, for such troubles generally have a physical rather than a moral or religious cause. Such cases, however, are usually

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obstinate, and difficult to deal with, needing much patience, care, and sympathy.

The *sin*-sick will also demand attention. Care must be exercised lest the treatment drive the sinning one further into sin. Faithfulness and sincerity there ought to be, but kindness also. There must be tenderness and pity, but not denunciation. These are the balm which heals the wound.

The soul also is often sick with sorrow and bereavement, and wherever there is sorrow there should the minister be found. Even if he is unable to say much, to express *words* of comfort, he should be present in the smitten home to give his sympathy. He will feel at such times how little that is helpful can be said, how poor words are ; but he can put love into his look, sympathy into the hand-shake, and give comfort through the prayer he offers to God. Sometimes he will be called upon to deal with an unusual grief, as, for example, a mother sorrowing because she thinks she has neglected her boy—not sent for the doctor in time, or not called in additional medical aid. Generally speaking, there is little foundation for the ideas, and the pastor must endeavour to make this clear, and use such arguments as will uproot the notions from her mind. Perhaps a still more painful case is where a mourner fears that the deceased was unfit to die, and that he has passed out of life without hope. There may be some cause for the fear, the life may point to such a conclusion ; but while faithful to his convictions, the

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pastor must do his best to comfort the bereaved by pointing out what was good in the character of the departed, and any hopeful signs in his death, assuring the troubled one that the 'Judge of all the earth will do right.'

(c) The minister is also called upon to visit such as are sick in temper; those who have vexed others, or who are vexed themselves. Very much of a minister's time is taken up in trying to patch up differences and heal grievances, many of which are trivial, between the members of his church. Somebody has slighted them, has looked wrongly or spoken harshly. These things he must endeavour to set right. Sometimes he will have serious quarrels to deal with, upon the settlement of which much depends—perhaps the welfare or otherwise of the church. Under such circumstances he must move cautiously, get to know all sides of the case, and conclude in his own mind before starting how he will act and what he will say. He will also do well to seek light and help at the throne of grace, for a man attempting to be a reconciler will be all the more effective by having heart and lip steeped in the spirit of prayer.

But enough has been said to illustrate some of the situations and circumstances under which a pastor will be called to act. It would be folly to attempt to exhaust such a subject, for cases will be as many as the days in the year, and as varied as the persons by whom he is surrounded.

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II

I. *How to visit.* Anything said under this head must necessarily be personal, and each pastor will have to do the work in his own way. Still, a little counsel may be helpful. Here, as in the last lecture, we may consider the question under two heads—general visitation and the visitation of the sick.

(1) General visitation. This must be systematized if time and strength are to be conserved. The first step towards efficiency is for a minister, as soon as he enters a church or station, to familiarize himself with the roll of members, and transfer their names, alphabetically arranged, with their addresses, into a visiting-book, to which should be added the names and addresses of all seatholders, and of any persons who occasionally attend, or who have sympathy with the church. The pew-steward can generally furnish this last information. Also, if the church be in a city or town, buy a good street (not commercial) directory and map, and study well the character of the locality around the church, and the best routes by which to reach the different points. Then, after the first week or two, and the excitement of receptions and official introductions are over, begin to find out where the members and friends live, paying a visit as soon as it can be done to every home, commencing of course with the officials of the church. And it will be far better for the minister to commence this work unaccompanied, for several reasons.

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Usually the minister is taken around the first time by some official. As a rule he, being strange, places himself entirely in the hands of his guide, and takes no notice at all of any landmarks, or of the way he is being led, and so is bewildered and no wiser the following day than he was at first ; whereas if he has to find his own way, he will note the streets, mark the houses, observe the different turnings, and so will have a mental picture of where he has been, and know his way about the locality the next time he visits it. The minister will more quickly understand the people, and get on good terms with them, when he is alone, for visiting is awkward and stilted with a third party present. It is felt that a new topic of conversation must be started in every home, and if prayer is offered it must be fresh every time, or the conductor will conclude that you have no resource ; whereas if you are by yourself you are much more at ease. Going out alone, inquiring and finding out your own way, will end in better work and in a saving of time, talent, and temper.

After the character of the locality is understood, and the nearest ' cuts ' from point to point ascertained, the locality or church parish may be divided into districts. The area may be cut up into, say, five : east, west, north, south, and central. These districts, with the streets within them, should be entered in the visiting-book, at the end. By this method it is seen at a glance what streets are in a given area, and who lives in them, and so a whole locality may

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be visited in one afternoon or evening ; whereas if names and homes only are entered, much time is wasted in wandering from place to place. Also disappointment will be avoided by this method. By looking up the list of streets, say, in the western division, each family in it would be at once recalled. I have frequently, on returning from a given neighbourhood, had to say, ' Why, I ought to have visited Mrs. So-and-so while I was out to-day ; I was in the next street.' Such regret will be prevented by working systematically.

When in the house let the manner be frank and free, but not aggressive ; and on the occasion of a first visit let the conversation be as general as possible. Do not give, nor try to elicit, confidences ; these will come later. You will find that you will have to initiate the conversation, and the art of doing this needs to be learned. Seek to find, as quickly and easily as may be, a talking-point—some general topic from which it will be easy to slide off into something more specific, and one which will compel the people to talk to you, for long silences are most embarrassing to visitor and visited.

A minister I once knew, now dead, was styled ' the silent man.' He was a great visitor too, but on entering the house he would sit on the edge of a chair nearest the door, and would say little more than ' yes ' and ' no ' from start to finish. The people were on fidgets, and not sorry when he departed. But the silent visitor is to be preferred

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to one who talks incessantly, and makes mutual conversation an impossibility. The one is painfully laconic, and the other compels everybody else to be so.

An apt visitor, too, will take an interest in the affairs of his people, and *show* that he is interested. He must not, however, pry into private matters; but a general and kindly interest in, and inquiry about, business, social engagements and domestic happenings will be appreciated. By degrees the minister will come to know many facts about a family and much of its inner life, and it will be well for him to make general notes of these in his visiting-book—not, of course, while in the presence of the family, but afterwards—such facts as the names, ages, and birthdays of the children, the occupation of the adults, the books they read, the games they are fond of. Recording such details may seem a waste of time, but in the end this practice will make for economy and efficiency. But while such information may be carefully preserved and augmented, it will not be wise to write down any judgements that may be formed upon domestic or religious matters, for these may inadvertently come to light and so bring trouble and pain to minister and people.

A minister will occasionally be called upon to interfere in family feuds. Whether he should do so must be carefully considered. If there is no reasonable hope of settling them he had better leave them alone. 'To take sides in a quarrel between husband

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and wife is usually a precarious business, and it will be a wise decision to hear whatever statements they wish to make in each other's presence only.' This rule may be occasionally broken, for there are such clear cases of neglect or ill-usage of, say, a long-suffering wife by her husband, that a minister is compelled to listen, and do all that he can to console, encourage, and counsel the heart-broken one. But such cases are rare. Usually the trouble arises through some misunderstanding, and where the faults are about equally divided. Very different treatment is called for here, and usually a little straight inquiry, and a bit of plain advice, will clear the air and bring about a truce. Both parties must be clearly reminded that they have covenanted to live together 'for better, for worse,' and that they must help each other to keep their mutual vows. If a minister had only courage enough to take such disagreements strongly in hand, they could often be settled right away.

But more frequently a minister will have to deal with troubles between parents and children. Usually it is a request made by mother or father to speak to a girl who has grown 'giddy,' a boy who is becoming wayward, or a young man who is going astray through bad company. He cannot do other than comply, but will need to move warily. He must not let the young people know that he has been spoken to on the matter, nor indeed refer directly to the offence; and must be most careful not to wound the dignity of the youth, or the sensitiveness

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of the maiden. He must bring the truth home by hint, suggestion, and especially by seeking to gain a personal influence over them ; for if he cannot draw he will never drive.

The question is frequently debated as to whether or not a minister should offer prayer in every home that he visits. Some think that it should be done always, whether seasonable or not. But, to speak personally, this practice is not always commendable ; it is altogether too mechanical, and sometimes may do more harm than good. To force, for instance, a woman busy at the washing-tub, or with two or three crying children about her, to kneel and pray because we happen to call is an injustice, and not very likely to have beneficial results. If there be truth in the Latin proverb, ' Laborare est orare,' the mother in finishing her duties in the wash-house may be as truly praying as we on our knees in the parlour. The guide in such questions is a little sanctified common sense. By all means pray if you have the impression that it ought to be done. Not to follow this impulse is to leave the home condemned. But a minister can induce the spirit of prayer without always engaging in the formal act. A spiritually-minded man will never depart from a home without leaving behind him a clearer consciousness of the Divine Presence. The atmosphere of devotion can be carried into a home without always intruding the forms of piety. If this be done, then many of the vices attaching to family visiting will be absent. One of the commonest of these is gossip.

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The minister will hear it, and will be strongly tempted to join in it, but must resist the temptation and do his best to discourage it. It may not be wise directly to rebuke the tattler, but he can use his wits, and turn the stream of conversation into another channel. The gossip and scandal-monger are deadly enemies to the Church, and for a minister to participate in these sins is to cause his church to commit suicide.

(2) Let me now offer a few words of advice, the outcome of experience, upon visiting the sick. To be successful in this a special aptitude is needed, for many otherwise good men are unable to do it effectively. There is a difference between this and ordinary visitation. It calls for a deeper sympathy and a more vivid imagination, i.e. the power to put ourselves in the place of the sick one, and the ability to call up vividly our own personal experience of sickness. In physical sickness the minister must not look at the case from his own standpoint alone, but from that of the doctor and of the nurse, and co-operate with both to bring about a cure. Restoration to health should be the aim of minister as well as of physician, while at the same time he ministers to the patient's spiritual needs. To this end let him enter the room quietly, and maintain a calm yet cheerful demeanour. He must avoid exciting conversation and talk that will unduly play upon the emotions. He should speak in a subdued voice, but avoid dropping into the stage whisper so common to the sick-room, and which is trying to the nerves of

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a patient. Prayer here should be usual, but never loud and always short. If the visitor has anything to say to an attendant or doctor, let it be said outside the room and not *sotto voce* within, as to do so arouses the suspicions of the patient and frequently agitates. If he shakes hands with the sick one (and to do so is desirable when he is not too weak), let him remember that sympathy can be communicated in this way as in no other, and there is soothing and healing in a hand-grasp, as there was in the touch of Jesus. This is not magic but psychics. It will depend upon circumstances as to how frequently such cases should be visited. If the illness be serious, a daily call at the home, even if the patient be not seen, is desirable; but as convalescence is neared, or where the illness is chronic, a periodical call will be all that is necessary. In chronic cases, and indeed in general visitation, a note of the date should be made, as the doctor does, so that the interval between visits may not be too long nor too short.

The question is frequently raised, Should ministers visit persons suffering from infectious diseases? I am afraid that only a Protestant minister would raise such an inquiry; no Catholic priest would think of asking it. Personally I have no hesitation about the answer. 'The Christian pastor must be no coward. He must take all necessary precautions on behalf of others, but he must not be afraid to go where he is needed. The physician must go into all these dangers; why should the

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minister be less courageous?'¹ He can take these risks more readily as an unmarried man, and herein lies one of the advantages of a celibate ministry; but if he be the father of a family, and especially if the children are young or delicate, the sacrifice is considerable. While he does not care for himself, he is anxious for the safety of others. But this is one of the risks involved in his choice of the ministry, and one which cannot be shirked. Nor are the risks as great as they appear to be on the surface. If they are met bravely, and with wise precaution, evil results very seldom follow. The doctor is a striking example of this, for, although he is spending most of his time amongst sick people, he very seldom contracts disease, and almost never carries contagion with him. With due care the minister may be just as immune. If I may be forgiven a personal word, I have never in my life refused to visit a dangerous case, either in the home or the hospital. I have hesitated, and shrunk from doing so, but in the end have done it, and have never caught, that I know of, any disease, nor carried any into the home, nor has one member of the family suffered from the action. Of course I have chosen the time for such visits. I have not gone unless the case was extremely urgent, nor when I have been unwell, nor when very tired and exhausted. I have also been careful not to sit unnecessarily near, and not to inhale the sick one's breath, and if the disease was very virulent have not shaken hands,

¹ Gladden, *The Christian Pastor*, p. 191.

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but have looked what that act of friendship means. After such a visit it is well to take a walk in the fresh air before entering any other house or returning home, and before mingling with the family to have a good wash. It may not be unwise on returning to change your clothing, placing the cast-off suit in the open air for a few hours. And, by-the-by, it is a wise practice to wash the hands after *all* visiting, and after any meeting where there has been much hand-shaking, and especially so before eating a meal.

2. Now a word as to *when to visit*. This also will depend upon circumstances, and will vary according to localities. The afternoon is the most suitable time for visiting the sick, mothers, and leisured people, but for the industrial classes the evening is the only possible time. This can be done before the evening meeting, or when no meeting has to be attended. I have often thought that a church would reap much benefit if it freed its minister from, say, the weekly preaching-service, allowing him to use the time in visiting. If working people are to be visited, the church must set its minister free at least two evenings a week for this purpose. Then certain people can only be seen at certain times. I remember in one circuit that I could visit certain families only on a Saturday evening—i.e. if I wished to see the heads of the home along with the rest. These were workmen, who usually reached home about eight o'clock each evening except on Saturdays. I made it a point, about once a month,

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to spend a Saturday evening amongst them, and the work was some of the best I have ever done, for it gave me the chance of talking, laughing, and praying with father, mother, and children.

Avoid calling on days, and at times, when families are busy or tired (never forget which are the washing-days), or on evenings set apart for purely family intercourse. Occasionally the minister will get a sudden impression that he ought to visit a certain home. This will come, perhaps, while he is busy reading or preparing a sermon, and when he is disinclined to listen. Such impressions every minister will get, and will be wise if he obey the call. Some may call such impulses superstition or vagrant fancies; but the man with spiritual insight knows better, for, apart from any divine communication, there are natural means by which soul can communicate with soul, when 'thought leaps up to wed with thought, ere thought can wed itself to speech.' By a telepathic law a soul in need can summon the soul of another with whom it is in sympathetic touch, and such the true minister is.

But some are slow to respond to far more mundane messages, and fail to visit when sent for. Some one in distress sends an urgent message to us, but we are engaged with friends, or deep in a book, or busy with a sermon, and so defer attention. We, of course, are going, *by-and-by*. Alas! we arrive just too late, and return filled with bitter compunction. But the delay is not always the pastor's fault. He frequently gets blamed for that which he

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cannot help. He is sometimes expected to divine when his people are ill. This is unfair, for it is their duty to send for him, as it is to send for the doctor, and a minister should train his people to do so.

The Christian pastor is a very privileged person ; he is permitted to enter the most sacred enclosure on earth, and to be trusted with the innermost secrets of family life. He must take good care that he does not abuse the privilege, nor violate the confidence. A minister must learn to keep secrets. There is no Confessional in Protestantism, but the Protestant pastor, human nature being what it is, will have confidences given to him that must be sacredly kept. His bosom must be a sealed sanctuary. Amongst professional men, such as doctors and lawyers, there is a code of honour that prevents them from speaking of the affairs of their patients and clients. A minister must be no less chivalrous. Not even in the seclusion of his own home should he speak of them ; they must be locked up in the chambers of his own memory for ever.

The task of the real pastor is no light one ; he, like his Master, bears his people's infirmities and carries their sorrows, for, in one evening perhaps, he has to be ' father, mother, husband, wife, child, and friend,' and he cannot be these without a big draft being made upon his nervous energy ; like Jesus, he will feel often that ' virtue has gone out of him.' This duty of visitation is no less taxing than that

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of preaching, and is scarcely secondary in importance to it. The Master's first commission is 'Go preach,' but His next is 'As ye go . . . heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.'

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